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THE  
MEMOIRS  
OF A  
FEMME DE CHAMBRE.

A NOVEL.

BY THE  
COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON :  
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.  
1846.



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OF  
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CHAPTER I.

WE live in an age when to write memoirs is almost as common, if not quite as easy, as to read them. It is the knowledge of this fact that gives me courage to attempt the task I have imposed on myself, and should I fail in executing it, I shall have at least achieved my principal object, that of noting down events from which some moral may be drawn, some warning taken. The sentiments and opinions of a person who has filled only a position generally deemed so subaltern a one, as that of a *Femme de*

*Chambre*, may be considered beneath the notice of grave and highly polished readers; but she who has been brought in close contact and daily association with individuals of her own sex, allowed to possess cultivated minds, and placed in the highest class, must be indeed peculiarly dull and unobservant if she has not profited by such advantages, and has not become able to draw inferences, and to form comments on what she has witnessed. Who will deny that the Memoirs of Madame de Motteville furnish some entertaining and instructive anecdotes and information relative to her royal mistress, Anne of Austria, the suspected wife of Louis XIII. ? and without the Memoirs of Madame de Staël, formerly Mademoiselle de Launay, of how many amusing facts connected with her haughty mistress, the Duchess de Maine, should we have remained ignorant ? I do not presume to institute any comparison between Mesdames de Motteville, de Staël, and my humble self; far be such vanity from me. I only name them to illustrate a hypothesis which I would fain advance, namely, that no one, not even a parent,

a husband, or the most intimate friend, can have the same opportunities of studying the character, disposition, temper, and peculiarities of a lady, as has her *Femme de Chambre*, who sees not only her *person*, but also her *mind en deshabillé*. Well and truly has it been observed by a clever writer, that no man is a hero to his *Valet de Chambre*. As well, and as truly may it be asserted, that no woman is a heroine to her personal attendant. How interesting then must be the study in the dressing rooms of persons who are seen by the world only in full costume, with their manners as scrupulously got up for the occasion as is their dress, both calculated to produce the most advantageous effect in society, and laid aside when in the privacy of the *chambre de toilette*, that sanctuary, where no concealments can exist. Having, as I hope, established my hypothesis that *Femmes de Chambre* can best know their mistresses, and proved, if I may be permitted to parody two lines of Pope, that

“ They best can paint them,  
Who have dressed them most ;”

I will commence by giving some account of myself, for it strikes me that a certain knowledge of an Author is always necessary in order that more confidence should be placed in his or her productions, and more allowance made for their defects.

I am the daughter of a man, who filled for some years the anomalous situation of private secretary, and *sur-intendant de maison*, to a nobleman of large expenditure and small means. I use the word anomalous, because my father possessed all the confidence of his employer, which could be accorded to the most trusted friend; yet, had to perform services which no friend could be charged with, and from which many menials would have recoiled. The well educated secretary, whose province it was to write and copy letters of great importance in more than two languages, his employer holding a high official appointment, had also the painful, and often humiliating task to perform, of soothing angry creditors, conciliating suspicious lenders of money, and making a small sum cover as large a surface of debt, as gold-beaters do their

thin leaf, which they draw out to so wonderful an extent. He was an excellent Chancellor of the Exchequer of his needy master, and an adept in the difficult art of keeping up appearances when any one, with less tact, would have let the nakedness of the land be seen. Was a dinner to be given, a ball or concert to be got up, when the funds were so low that no sovereign could be found in Lord Willamere's purse, although his royal Sovereign smiled most graciously on him whenever opportunity offered, Stratford, so was my father named, was told to manage some way or other to *find* money for those who would no longer furnish things on credit, and to *talk over* those who were less obdurate, to add some more items to their already long bills. Musicians and singers, he has often been heard to say, were the most unmanageable persons he had to deal with. *They* would insist on ready money, especially those amongst them who had established reputations, and high salaries at the Italian Opera; and these were precisely the persons whom Lord Willamere desired most should perform at his concerts,

Many has been the *Casta Diva*, who, in spite of all the honied words addressed to her by *Mons. le Secrétaire*, in order to coax her either to moderate her demands, or to give credit to his Lord for the payment of her extravagant ones, who has uttered refusals in a louder and harsher tone, than was ever ventured on in the most termagant rôles before the public, and who has insisted on being paid in advance with gold for her notes.

Many have been the rising singers, whose fame had not yet been stamped by fashion, and who consequently would have been content with a trifling remuneration, who sung at concert after concert at Lord Willamere's without receiving any, lured by the delusive hopes that their names figuring in the papers, as having appeared there, might lead to a command from royalty, or future *paid* engagements. My father dared not reveal to those poor *artistes* how little chance there was of his Lord's advancing their interests; or how tenacious he was of never interfering in the patronage of those appointed to arrange concerts at "the

Castle at Windsor," or at "the Palace;" yet it pained him to permit them to remain in error, and to see them incurring expense they could but ill afford, in order to be well-dressed at Lord Willamere's concerts, whenever the *prima donnas* of the day inexorably refused to sing at them. Lenders of money were lured to grant loans, by hopes held out of good situations to be procured for their relations; and creditors were soothed by similar promises. My Lord Willamere, too, was a bachelor, exceedingly good-looking, and with very captivating manners, two advantages, which, joined to his high rank and fashion, led all those interested in his welfare to believe that he must inevitably marry some rich heiress, whose wealth would enable him to pay off all his debts. Hence, never did one of those poor victims, almost always sought for their gold, appear in the metropolis, that she was not selected by the creditors of Lord Willamere as his bride, and each of these delusive hopes was the cause of a prolongation of their patience, and of his lordship's bills.

The suavity of his manner, and easiness of his temper, had attached his secretary to Lord Willamere; and although he saw much to censure in the reckless extravagance of his employer, and his utter carelessness of the sufferings or ruin of those who trusted him, he nevertheless had so fascinated my father, that he would have made any sacrifice rather than abandon him.

The secretary often accompanied his lord to Altonbury Castle, the seat of the marquis of that name, who had married Lord Willamere's only sister. He there saw my mother, who was a governess to Lady Altonbury's children, became captivated by her beauty and gentleness, and, after a courtship of some length, protracted by the consciousness of their mutual poverty, and state of dependence, and the dread of entailing increased difficulties on each other, they, hopeless of any amelioration in their circumstances, took the desperate step of marrying. My mother, like her husband, was an orphan with no near relations, so there was no one to consult on the step they were about

to take—no one to warn them of its consequences. Lord Willamere, who felt he could not do without my father, made a merit of necessity, and told him, when the approaching event was announced to him, that if he were *determined* to marry a portionless bride, an act of folly, however, which he most gravely counselled him against, he would grant his sanction to his bringing his wife to Willamere House. Mrs. Stratford might make herself useful in superintending the domestic arrangements, and checking the imposition of the housekeeper and housemaids; nay, as Lady Altonbury had informed him she wrote a fine hand, and was a proficient in French, German, and Italian, she might be made serviceable in copying out the foreign correspondence. My father's poverty left him no alternative, and my mother entered on a life of painful dependence, with all the humiliation, but not the salary, of a servant.

My father's was indeed a laborious and unhappy life. The only son of a poor curate, who half-starved himself to send him to college, and who only lived long enough to see him

become a good scholar, the poor young man found himself wholly dependent on those in the college who could speak personally of his character ' and aequirements. Through the recommendation of one of these, a man of considerable influence, he entered the house of Lord Willamere, fully convinced that one who held so high an official appointment could not fail to have an opportunity of remunerating his services: and faithfully and conscientiously he determined they should be fulfilled, trusting that he might eventually look forward to some situation offering a modest competency. Too inexperienced to name a salary for his services, he went on from year to year, receiving now and then, sums of ten pounds, as instalments of the allowance, the precise amount of which had never been specified; the receipt of which small payments, however, he had always carefully noted, calculating on deducting them from the gross amount he was to have whenever a day of reckoning came. This so much wished-for day, however, never arrived. Lord Willamere never had a moment's

time to look into his own personal or household expenditure, much less to come to a settlement with his secretary; and the delicacy of sentiment of the said secretary, added to his perfect knowledge of the many claims on his lord, and the very small means for meeting even a quarter of them, prevented his urging his own interests, or even reminding his employer of the pecuniary embarrassments in which he continually found himself. If Lord Willamere ever bestowed a thought on the position of his secretary,—and it is doubtful if he ever found time for it, so occupied was he in finding expedients to meet the difficulties of his own,—he probably consoled himself by thinking that “Stratford could rub on some way or another. *His* tradesmen would certainly give credit to *his* secretary, the person through whom all *his* payments were made. Yes, Stratford was sure to get on; and then, persons like him could live for so little, that *they* could not be exposed to the annoyances that attend men of high rank with fortunes inadequate to meet the demands entailed by their station.”

Those with large establishments are more disposed to underrate, than overrate, the pecuniary wants of persons in subordinate situations. They seldom reflect that regularity in payments, so essential to the well-being of all classes, becomes doubly necessary to those with limited means; and that no degree of economy, however scrupulously exercised, can ward off the ruinous results of an ill-paid income.

Obliged to be almost constantly in Willamere House, to be ready to attend his lord's summons, it was deemed expedient that my father should reside altogether there. His repasts, and he took care that they should be as frugal as possible, were furnished in the mansion by a *fille de cuisine*, whose skill in the culinary department he rarely taxed more than in the cooking of a couple of mutton chops or a beef steak with some potatoes; and his solitary meals were any thing but luxurious or cheerful. They who bask in the sunshine of fortune, with enjoyments courting them on every side, can form but a faint notion of the intensity with which the poor and lonely cherish affec-

tion, that first cordial drop in the bitter cup of life, which has cheered, and made them forget its former unpalatableness. To be no longer a solitary being on earth, unloved, uncared for, wearing away existence in the monotonous routine of uninteresting duties, is almost to be happy ; but to be warmly, fondly loved, and by a creature, too, gifted with no common mind, as well as no ordinary share of beauty and accomplishment, was indeed bliss. No wonder, then, that my father forgot his dependent state, his contracted means, prudence—every thing—but that he loved, and was beloved; and without a home, however humble, which he could call his own, wedded; and, by Lord Willamere's permission, brought his bride to Willamere House.

His lordship had never been so much struck with her beauty, as when, on his return home a few days after his secretary's marriage, he presented himself in the small sitting room assigned for her use, to offer his congratulations, and express his hope that she would make herself at home and comfortable. There are many men who never think of sin till an oppor-

tunity of committing it with facility, if not with impunity, seems to be afforded to them. "Egad," thought Lord Willamere, as he left the meanly furnished and small room inhabited by my mother, "I never remarked how very handsome Stratford's wife is before. I know no woman in the society in which I live, who is half so beautiful. The fellow has devilish good taste, I must acknowledge. My libertine friends will congratulate me on having so fair an inmate, and all my denials will never convince them that *I* had nothing to say to arranging this marriage, or that I do not feel a more than common interest in Mrs. Stratford.—And, by Jove, it will be very difficult *not* to feel a more than ordinary interest in her. Having so pretty a woman thrown in one's way, as it were, brought into my very house, and without any contrivance whatever of mine; yes, the temptation might prove too strong for a wiser man than I am, where a beautiful woman is in question, and I fear will be too great for me. Well, Stratford must blame himself if any thing should happen. It will be his own

fault for bringing her into my house. However innocent our acquaintance may be, the goodnatured world will be sure to think the reverse, and Mrs. Stratford's reputation will suffer as much, as if she were blameable; and, *après tout*, when a woman's reputation is injured, I don't see why *I* need be so scrupulous of seeking the good fortune for which I shall be sure to have the credit! I am tired of the Duchess. She really is so *over-  
loring*, so *exigeante*, that a jealous wife of my own could not be more *ennuyeuse* than this wife of my friend. Yet, hang me if I would not rather injure any man of my acquaintance than poor Stratford. He is so gentleman-like in his feelings, so refined in his habits, and so delicate about asking for money. I almost wish he had not thrown this temptation in my way.

“What fools married men are! They always lay the foundation of their wives' fall. Look at every trial occasioned by conjugal infidelity, and one will find that it was the husband who established between some one of his dissolute

friends, and his wife, the most dangerous of all habits, that of allowing him to become *l'ami de la maison*, whose daily visits and constant attendance have often brought the lady's name into disrepute before aught more than appearances could be urged against her. The poor woman finds herself the town talk before she dreamt of evil. The foolish husband, convinced of the innocence of his wife, and the sincerity of his friend, vows that *he* will not be bullied by the world into breaking off an intimacy that has become necessary to his comfort. The wife's mind, by slow, perhaps, but by sure degrees, gets accustomed to the notion of having her name coupled with Lord A, or Mr. B. Lord A or Mr. B begins to think it a folly to let the world talk without cause, and *opportunity*, that bane to virtue, leads from imaginary to real guilt.

“O ye unhappy husband! knew ye your danger as we bachelors and *hommes de bonnes fortunes* do, how would ye eschew permitting such dangerous intimacies beneath your roofs! How would ye shun the insidious friend, who begins by making

himself agreeable to both husband and wife, by breaking the monotony of their conjugal *tête à tête*, and ends by destroying every vestige of affection between them.

“ But here I am moralizing on the fate of husbands in general, even while meditating an injury on one in particular. Strange folly, is it not, that men who as bachelors have had personal experience of the consequences which too frequently result from the weakness of husbands in exposing their wives to temptation, should fall precisely into the same error when they become Benedicts? This does seem strange and unaccountable ! but the cause may be traced to the want of reason men betray in the selection of their wives. They marry only for beauty, or for fortune. The beauty is loved and treated, for a short time, as a mistress, then slighted as a wife. Her society becomes irksome, her consciousness of the change in her husband’s feelings,—and few have the delicacy or kindness to conceal such changes,—wounds and offends her ; reproaches, sullenness, or low spirits ensue. His home is no longer agreeable, and he is glad

to call in the aid of some pleasant friend, to render it less intolerable. One folly leads to another, until the husband rushes into a court of law, to have an evaluation made by twelve honest men, of the loss he has sustained in his wife's affection and society, both of which he was, in all probability, heartily tired of; or if, more patient and enduring, he submits to his fate without seeking redress from the law, he must be content with being pointed at, poor easy man, as a fool, who is imposed on, or as a wretch who connives at the guilt of his wife, and his own dishonour.

“It is this knowledge of life, that is, life in the world in which I live, that has caused me to be a bachelor at——Hang it, I hate to mention the precise age at which I have arrived. I certainly don't look so old,” and Lord Willamere glanced complacently at himself in the glass. “I wish my hair did not get so thin about the temples. I have tried every balm, oil, and pomatum ever advertised in the newspapers, but I find no advantage from them. What a strange fancy the old tyrant Time has for hair! I sup-

pose he mistakes it for hay, and so mows it with the scythe, with which he is always represented."

Such were the cogitations of Lord Willamere on the day he paid his secretary's wife his first visit. If any of our readers should question how we became acquainted with the said cogitations, questions which we warn them are always considered by Authors as unpolite as if in society some one inquired how certain facts just stated, and supposed to be known only by individuals equally interested in not revealing them, came to be known—we inform them once for all, that historians, biographers, and novelists, are endowed with a peculiar faculty, denied to others—that of knowing what passes in the minds of the characters they portray. How else should grave historians be able to give us not only the words of kings, heroes, and statesmen, uttered in the privacy of their chambers, to ministers, generals, and secretaries, who have never been even suspected of betraying their confidence, but even the thoughts known only to themselves? Having now, as we hope, established our right to the privilege we claim of making our readers acquainted

with the secret thoughts and reflections of the characters we attempt to delineate, we trust we may henceforth continue to unroof the heads of our personages, and display what passes in them, as Asmodeus did the roofs of houses, without being further questioned as to our means of acquiring information, and that our readers will take for granted all we write. In this confidence we leave them at the close of this, our first chapter, meaning in the second to let them see the result of Lord Willamere's cogitations.

## CHAPTER II.

HAD Lord Willamere followed the dictates of his inclinations, his first visit to the wife of his secretary would have been quickly followed up by a second ; but the prudence instigated by a consciousness of his own evil intentions, whispered the necessity of allowing some days to elapse before he presented himself again in her apartment. My father felt rather flattered than surprised when informed of the courtesy of his employer ; and, good easy man ! received it as a proof of the respect entertained for himself. But when, a few days after, Lord Willamere proposed that he and Mrs. Stratford should dine with him, and urged it so strongly that he knew not how to refuse, a doubt, for the first time, crossed his mind whether it would be correct to bring his wife to the table of Lord Willamere,

without the presence of any other lady to sanction it.

“ Surely,” said the Earl, observing his hesitation to accept the invitation, “ you, my dear Stratford, who have been for so many years domesticated, as it were, here, and who have so often dined *tête-à-tête* with me, cannot let any false notions of etiquette or ceremony prevent your wife from making a trio at my table? Were you, my good fellow, to ask me to make a third with you and *madame* at dinner, in your apartment, there could surely be no impropriety in my accepting it. Where, then, can be the difference in you and her dining with me in mine?”

Although this sophistry did not convince the secretary, it embarrassed him, and not knowing how to get out of the dilemma in which he found himself placed by it, he accepted the invitation.

“ I wish you had declined it, my dear,” said my mother, “ for I don’t think it either prudent or proper that I should dine at Lord Willamere’s table without any other woman. You

know I had a great objection to becoming an inmate in the house of a single man, and that only your prayers that our union should no longer be protracted, and the impossibility of our scanty means furnishing us a lodging elsewhere, induced me to consent to a measure which, could it be avoided, I would repudiate."

"Well then, dearest, all I will urge is, that as I foolishly accepted the invitation, do pray for this once accompany me. Lord Willamere seemed to have set his heart on it, and may be offended if you do not go. There will be no other guests, and henceforth we will decline dining with him."

"I would not have you decline; on the contrary, I wish you to live exactly on the same terms with his lordship as previously to our marriage, when you used to dine with him so often."

"What, and leave you to dine alone, Emily? No; that I could not bring myself to do."

And the fond husband pressed the delicate form of his wife to his heart, and she, unwilling to refuse any request of his, silenced the plead-

ing of her own better judgment, and consented to dine with his lordship. The air of embarrassment and timidity with which she entered the library, betrayed to Lord Willamere that my mother was an unwilling guest there; and with all the tact peculiar to a well-bred man, and above all, one who had deeply studied woman, he instantly endeavoured to re-assure her, by the respectful manner in which he welcomed her. Had she been a person of the most exalted rank, he could not have evinced a more deferential tone towards her; and many were the ladies of his acquaintance, with high-sounding titles, who would have been surprised had they witnessed how much more respectful was his treatment of his poor secretary's wife, than of themselves. Lord Willamere was one of the most agreeable men of his day, and seldom did he wish to please, that his efforts were not crowned with success. His conversation, at once brilliant and rational, possessed the power of drawing out those with whom he talked; and never did they leave his society without being pleased with him, and satisfied with

themselves. Often had my mother, during his frequent visits to his sister, Lady Altonbury, been a delighted listener to the conversation of Lord Willamere, while she presided at the tea-table; but she was forced to admit that he appeared to less advantage there, than while doing the honours of his own; and the delicate tact with which he directed his attention equally to her husband as to herself, flattered while it pleased her. Nevertheless, she could neither vanquish nor dissemble the constraint, which a consciousness of her being in a false position imposed on her, and never had she appeared to less advantage than on that day, when, entrenched in a more than ordinary degree of reserve, she did little more than assent in monosyllables to the observations of her clever host.

The dessert had only been a few minutes placed on the table, when the abrupt entrance of two gentlemen increased the embarrassment of my mother. Nor did Lord Willamere seem pleased by their presence. Both stared with ill-disguised astonishment at the

lady, and this circumstance rendered her still more sensible of the equivocalness of her position. Lord Willamere, with intuitive delicacy, marked her increased embarrassment, as well as the glances of unchecked admiration which his visitors directed towards her. Hoping, however, that they would soon withdraw, he did not at first present them to her; but when they stated that they had dined at the coffee-room at the House of Commons, where they had been detained by a debate, and had come to communicate some political news to him, he was compelled to ask them to sit down and have some wine. "Permit me, Mrs. Stratford, to present to you, Lord Henry Middlecourt and Mr. Addington," said Lord Willamere. The evident embarrassment and timidity of my mother, while it brought the roses to her cheek, and enhanced her beauty, only served to convince the libertine friends of her host, that the suspicions they had formed to her disadvantage were but too well founded. Each in turn addressed some common-place observation to her, but her reserved demeanour, and

monosyllabic replies, discouraged their advances, although their injurious opinion of her remained unchanged. My mother sate on thorns, and when Lord Willamere asked her advice on some subject connected with furnishing houses, to which the conversation had turned, she, anxious to make known to the strangers her real position, referred to my father, saying, "My husband, my lord, is more conversant with such matters than I am." This speech she expected would at once remove the surmises to which her presence, *en famille* as it were, at Lord Willamere's table had given rise,—for, that injurious surmises had been formed, she with feminine quickness of apprehension had guessed; but she little knew the men who had formed them, for no sooner had they become acquainted with the fact, that the beautiful woman before them was the wife of their host's secretary, than their prurient imaginations created an attachment between the parties, little creditable to the virtue of the lady or the morals of Lord Willamere. They exchanged glances of intel-

ligence confirmatory of their suspicions, while my poor mother's prophetic spirit quailed as it divined the gross insult which these suspicions offered to her. She longed to leave the room, yet dreaded doing so, lest such a step might betray the fact of her being an inmate at Lord Willamere's, and so render her case still worse in their eyes. For the first time she began to think her husband obtuse, when stealing sundry looks at him expressive of her dissatisfaction, she saw that he appeared wholly unconscious of any cause for such a feeling on her part, and was quietly eating some fruit. Not so careless was Lord Willamere. *He* evinced, by various ways, that he was sensible that she was ill at ease, and that he was pained at her being so. His manner towards her became, if possible, more respectful than before the entrance of his unwelcomed guests; and, when he saw that it failed to reassure her, he proposed ringing to command coffee to be served in the library.

“As this is the first time, Mrs. Stratford, that you have honoured me by your presence

here," said he, "I must not permit you to be bored too long in the dining-room. When my sister, Lady Altonbury, comes to town, I hope you will give her and me the pleasure of your company at dinner here often."

There was a considerateness and delicacy in this speech which gratified my mother, although the motive of it was so obvious to her, that she more than ever reproached herself for having been overruled into placing herself in a position that rendered it necessary. Never previously had she been so sensible of her husband's want of knowledge of the world, and more especially of the *usages du monde*, against which her presence at the table of Lord Willamere, without any other female to countenance it, was a violation, as then, because she had never before seen him placed in any position that called for the exercise of his *savoir vivre*. Bred in a college, and among students who like himself depended solely on their acquirements for future subsistence, he had little time, and no occasion, to become acquainted with the etiquette of society; and his natural good-

breeding had hitherto prevented this want of knowledge of the conventional habits of life, from being noticed. Almost as great a recluse in the house of his patron, as he had been at college, his solitary habits were only broken into by an occasional *tête-à-tête* dinner with Lord Willamere, and an Easter or Christmas visit to his lordship's sister, when he accompanied him in order to be on the spot to carry on the voluminous correspondence that devolved on the man in office. No wonder, then, that he was ignorant of the rules of etiquette, invented to hold society together, and any breach of which is looked on by the supporters of this artificial code as a sin of deeper dye than one involving the most serious consequences. The very frankness and honesty of his nature, joined to the seclusion of his youth in a college, and since then in the house of Lord Willamere, rendered him more unfit than other men for the acquisition of this species of knowledge; and while perfectly capable of giving an epitome of the laws of nations, he might at any hour unconsciously commit a solecism on the

puny ones of the artificial circle denominated the fashionable world. It was this ignorance that led him to urge his wife to fulfil the dinner engagement he had accepted for her with Lord Willamere, and which kept him from comprehending the glances of painful embarrassment which from time to time she cast towards him, after the arrival of Lord Henry Middlecourt and Mr. Addington.

“Dear, good William, his is too fine a nature to suspect the evils that render a strict observance of the rules of etiquette so necessary in society,” thought his fond wife. “It must, therefore, be my duty to guard against any infraction of them, and to avoid, henceforth, those embarrassing positions into which his ignorance of conventional usages might lead me.”

“Were you ill, dearest Emily?” inquired my father, when he joined his wife in the library; leaving Lord Willamere to hear the political news which his visitors came to communicate.

“No, not ill, William; only ill at ease,

because conscious that I committed a breach in the rules of propriety in dining at Lord Willamere's table. I was mortified that two of his lordship's friends should have become cognizant of the fact, and was covered with confusion at the bare idea of the evil interpretation they would but too probably put on it."

"Surely, Emily, you judge them too severely! What evil could be attributed when I, your husband, was present?"

"Alas, dear William, had you lived, as I have done, in families where *appearances* were as severely judged as crimes, you would not wonder that I felt embarrassed, nay more, positively alarmed, this evening."

Then it was that my mother revealed to her simple-minded husband some of those laws of etiquette of which he had previously been in utter ignorance, and made him a wiser, though not a happier man; for now, aware that his wife's objection to dining at Lord Willamere's table was founded on her sense of propriety, and not, as he had before imagined, from a dislike to society, he felt hurt that a man so

well versed in a knowledge of the world as his lordship, should have proposed a step in violation of its usages; and he promised that henceforth he would never urge his Emily to act contrary to her own sense of what was correct.

“You are a devilish lucky dog, Willamere,” said Lord Henry Middlecourt to his host, when the door closed after his lordship’s secretary.

“I am not aware of any peculiar good luck just now,” replied Lord Willamere, endeavouring to look as unconscious as possible, although well divining to what good fortune his friend alluded.

“Come, come, don’t be so very sly; you know perfectly well that I refer to the luck of your having a secretary with so very handsome a wife, and who is so sociable as to come and dine with you, *en famille*, whenever you wish it.”

“You are quite wrong in your conjectures, I can assure you, Middlecourt. Mrs. Stratford never dined with me before,—is a particularly correct woman, and a great favourite with my sister, Lady Altonbury.”

“All this we are bound to believe, my dear fellow, the moment you assert it, and more especially with such a grave face. Nevertheless I must still consider you a very lucky man to have so simple-minded a secretary with so handsome a wife; why, he seemed as innocent of his own false position as a child, while his handsome wife betrayed in a thousand ways her overwhelming consciousness of it.”

“I really can see nothing false in his position. He has dined with me a hundred times before.”

“Yes, when he was a bachelor I suppose; and if you can get him to see no harm in bringing his beautiful wife into your lordship’s dangerous company, to enable her to contrast your powers of captivation, allowed by all women to be irresistible, with his simplicity and *manque de savoir vivre*, I must persevere in thinking you a lucky fellow.”

“No more of this bantering, Middlecourt; it is out of place, I assure you.” And Lord Willamere looked so displeased, that his friend saw it was time to drop the subject. But

though he did so, his conviction that a *tendresse* towards the secretary's pretty wife existed on the part of Lord Willamere, remained firm as ever; nay, the very seriousness with which the latter denied it, convinced him still more of the truth of his suspicions.

When Lord Henry Middlecourt and Mr. Addington walked from Lord Willamere's to their club that night, they renewed the subject of Mrs. Stratford.

"She is either a dragon of prudery, which her presence at Willamere's table would seem to impugn, or else she is afraid of making him jealous, for you saw how cold and reserved she was," said Lord Henry Middlecourt.

"But might we not put a more charitable interpretation on the poor woman's conduct?" observed Mr. Addington. "She may be correct, though not versed in the rules of strict propriety, as her dining with Willamere implies; and she may be in love with her husband, who is a very good-looking fellow—a possibility that never has entered your head, my friend."

Their arrival at their club prevented Mr. Addington offering any other hypothesis in

justification of the secretary's wife; but none that he could suggest would have changed the opinion of his companion, who, accustomed to look on the evil side of all pictures, had made up his mind on this subject. Nor did he refrain from communicating it to others. Many were the young *roués* at the club that night to whom he gave an exaggerated account of the snug little party he had broken in upon at Willamere's, exciting in the minds of all a strong desire to see the beautiful Mrs. Stratford, a sentiment of envy at the *bonne fortune* of Willamere, and of contempt for the secretary, whom they set down either as a duped, or an infamous husband conniving at his own dishonour. Thus, while two beings, innocent of even a thought of guilt, and incapable of entertaining one, were quietly and calmly slumbering on their pillows, slander was busy with their names: the pure wife was mentioned as one who might be sought, if not won, by any of the libertines among whom the fame of her beauty was bandied about; and the finger of scorn was ready to be pointed at her honourable-minded husband, by men who would have

gloried in dishonouring him; and Lord Willamere was considered as a very lucky fellow, much to be envied for this *bonne fortune*. How far from the truth were the suspicions of these libertines! For while they declared Lord Willamere a lucky dog, and circulated among their coteries the report of his supposed *liaison* with his secretary's wife, that nobleman was devising plans for furnishing excuses for being admitted to her presence, yet so awed by her dignified reserve, that many of those schemes which suggested themselves to his prolific brain, were dismissed in his dread lest their being carried too promptly into execution might alarm or offend her sensitive delicacy. Yet this very delicacy and reserve invested her with new charms. Never previously had he encountered a woman who inspired him with such a dread of incurring her displeasure. Was it possible that she had already divined the sentiments he felt towards her, so guarded too as he had been? To the unlucky and ill-timed visit of Lord Henry Middlecourt and Mr. Addington, he attributed her extraordi-

nary reserve; and heartily did he wish both these gentlemen in a place not to be named to ears polite, for their *mal-à-propos* visit and its consequences. He felt certain that one, if not both men would give their own version of the dinner party they had broken in on, and that the reputation of Mrs. Stratford would be made the sport of their coteries. He lamented this probability, not from any respect for her character, but from a dread that such reports might not only, by some chance, reach her ears, and so put her still more on her guard, but that they might encourage other pretenders to her favour.

“Fools,” thought Lord Willamere, “while they believe me blessed with her affection, I dare not even hint that I aspire to it, lest she should discard me from her presence for ever. What a lovely, what an exquisite creature she is! There is something about her that repels even the slightest approach to familiarity, and makes me feel when near her, that I shall never have courage to tell her I love her. I wish I could get her out of my head—out of my

heart, I should have said—for hang me if she has not taken possession of that fortress, which, though often assailed, and with sundry breaches made in it, never before capitulated to a victorious enemy. To think of her lavishing the treasures of her affection on poor simple Stratford, while I would give worlds, if I possessed them, for even the privilege of merely seeing her every day and being permitted to converse with her. I could not have believed it possible that in so short a time I should have become so madly in love, and with so little prospect too of a return. To see her husband eating his dinner as phlegmatically as if she were not seated opposite to him, while her beautiful face, lovely in all its various expressions, rendered it a difficult task for me to keep my eyes from it even for a moment, or to eat a morsel, was really wonderful. Happy man! *he* is so sure of her affection that he can eat in peace, while the bare idea of ever making her sensible of my passion sends the blood so rapidly to my heart that my pulse throbs and my hand trembles. I can think of nothing but

her. The notion that she is beneath my roof, that only a few stairs and a corridor separate us, fires my blood. Vain thought—an impassable gulph divides us! She loves another, and is a virtuous, a chaste woman. Only such can inspire the passion I now feel. Could I hope to vanquish the virtue of the too charming Emily, I should love her less madly than I do; and libertine as I have been, and as I am, she would be less dazzlingly bright, less lovely, were she divested of that purity, which, like a veil, shades, but conceals not her beauty, giving a winning grace to it. Then the absence of all coquetry, all desire to please, how it enhances her attractions! If women did but know how much more they captivate us by not seeking to do so, and how irresistible a charm virtue lends them, how few would become our victims, and have to deplore their own credulity and our falsehood!”

Such were the reflections that filled the mind of the enamoured Lord Willamere, as he reclined on his sleepless couch, tortured by the pangs of a hopeless passion.

## CHAPTER III.

LORD WILLAMERE allowed four days to pass over after the dinner described in our former chapter, before he ventured again to present himself at the door of the little sitting-room occupied by the wife of his secretary. How often during those four days, which seemed to him of interminable length, had he been tempted to break through the restrictions his prudence had imposed on him, and to seek the presence of her who now occupied all his thoughts ! But a dread of alarming her by his too frequent visits deterred him ; and he imagined that a forbearance which cost him so many struggles merited the reward of a less cold reception than he had previously experienced. The four days which had appeared to creep so slowly, and to be of such interminable

length to him, had glided so rapidly by with Mrs. Stratford, that, when he sent to inquire if she were at home, his visit struck her as following so quickly on the heels of his former one, that a sense of its impropriety brought the blush of wounded delicacy to her cheek.

“Present my respects to his lordship, and say that I am so particularly engaged that I cannot receive visitors,” said she to the servant.

The message had so powerful an effect on the nerves of Lord Willamere, that he positively grew red and then pale, as he reflected on it. How cold, how cutting! nay, how insolent was such treatment of *him*,—and in his own house too! And for the nonce Lord Willamere forgot that the very circumstance which added to his displeasure on this occasion, namely, his visit being refused *in his own house*, ought to have pleaded against his entertaining any project hostile to the honour or peace of those who so far confided in him as to become its inmates. He forgot the gross breach of hospitality and of honour he meditated, and

with a meanness unworthy of a gentleman, presumed that the very circumstance which ought to have rendered Mrs. Stratford sacred in his eyes, should have induced a more respectful deference to his proposed courtesy. Then it occurred to him that she might be unwell, or perhaps in an undress in which she did not wish to be seen. Yes, it must be so, and *he* had been wrong in blaming her for declining his visit. The wife of a poor secretary could not be expected to be always dressed in a style fit to receive visitors of distinction, like *les grandes dames* of his acquaintance, and allowance must be made for Mrs. Stratford. He longed to inquire after her health when he entered the bureau where her husband was writing, but an embarrassment unusual to him, which, whether proceeding from a consciousness of his own evil intentions, or a dread of awakening the suspicions of his secretary, checked the inquiry as it rose to his lips, and he felt, for the first time, ill at ease with Stratford.

When he rode out in the afternoon, and passed a certain nursery in the environs of

London, no less remarkable for the beauty of the *bouquets* sold there than for the extravagance of the prices demanded for them, he omitted not to purchase one for the lady of his thoughts; and as he threw down the guinea asked for it, he forgot that the said guinea was one of the last remaining in his purse from a loan effected some ten days before on the reasonable terms of fifty per cent; nay more, he remembered not that the poor secretary's wife for whom this superfluous luxury was intended, might, from his backwardness in paying the services of her husband, be in want of many of the comforts, if not necessities of life. *He* thought only of marking his attention by a delicate gift that might remind the receiver of the donor, and as he had the fragrant *bouquet* enveloped in paper, and confided to the hands of his groom, he only wished that he might have the pleasure of presenting it in person to the lady for whom it was designed.

"I have now, my lord, some very rare and fine specimens of the flowers your lordship has so often asked for," said the nursery-man.

“I do not require any at present,” was the reply; but a whole history of man’s inconstancy was comprised in it.

“There’s really no knowing what to make of these great folk,” observed the nursery-man to his wife, when, having seen Lord Willamere gallop off, he entered the little parlour in which she was seated at her work. “Why, it was only a month ago that my Lord Willamere used to come here continually, asking for that new species of heart’s-ease, and saying he would give any price for it; and now, when I have taken such pains to get it, and expected to be well paid for my trouble, he tells me he doesn’t require it. I suppose as how the lady he wanted it for has now some fresh fancy.”

“It’s more likely, Thomas, that *his lordship* has some fresh fancy. Ah! you men, you men. I often think that one might guess the changes in these fine gentlemen’s hearts, by the changes in their orders for flowers. One time they’re mad for some particular flower, and will be satisfied with no other, because, as every fool might know, the lady who is the favourite for

the time, likes that best. Then some other flower is wanted, and only that will do."

"But mayhap, Mary, that it isn't the fault of the men, but the women. Your sex are so changeable, that one day you like one flower, and the next another."

"No, Thomas, it's no such thing, we always prefer the flower we liked best when we were in love. Don't I always prefer the moss-rose above all other flowers? and don't you remember how you used to bring me one every Sunday while they were in bloom, and I used to keep it in water, and sigh when it faded? Ah! how well I remember those days! But I am sure that there is always some new love in the case when these fine gentlemen ask for a new flower. Do you remember how many *bouquets* of forget-me-not this same Lord Willamere used to send to that grand house in Grosvenor Square, during one season? Then the prices he used to pay, a few weeks ago, for heart's-ease to send to Belgrave Square! Ah! I warrant me the poor lady there may want heart's-ease now, for what *he* cares about the matter, for

there's a new fancy in his mind, I'll be sworn."

"Well, well, Mary, that's no business of ours. We must hear, see, and say nothing. But I often think to myself, that if husbands wanted to find out their wives' secrets, they might discover 'em by going round to our green-houses. They'd then learn the prices, and mayhap the buyers, of the rare flowers their ladies have every day, and that would make 'em open their eyes. What husband, except during the honeymoon, would pay such sums for particular flowers as many a gentleman pays here?"

"Yes, Thomas, it's all very true, and ladies might also find out, when those for whom they sometimes lose honour, and risk shame and disgrace, are playing 'em false, by inquiring at our green-houses, what flowers are now bought by certain gentlemen, and where they are sent to?"

"It's all the better for our trade, Mary, that such questions are seldom asked, or if asked, that we are too cute to answer 'em."

"It sometimes makes me sad, Thomas, to think

that such innocent things as flowers should be used for sinful purposes. Sure their delicate colours, lovely bloom, and fragrant scent, ought to remind one of the Giver of all good, who has yielded them to please us, and ought to chase evil thoughts away. But, forgetful of this, these beautiful things, that live but for a day, are sent to breathe secret but evil thoughts, where sometimes a letter dare not be sent or a visit paid; and they turn to be the messengers of sin, and do the work of corruption. Little does a husband think, when he sees a fine nosegay on the table of his handsome wife, or in her bosom, or held with pleasure to her nose, that it speaks to her as plainly, but more secretly than words could do, of some false friend, whom he has received into his house, and who is planning his dishonour."

"You're always for going to the end of things, Mary, and you remind me of what you read out of the book one day about seeing sermons in stones. For you'd make a sermon out of flowers, and spoil our trade into the bargain."

"No Thomas, I wouldn't, but I'd let no man,

were I a gentleman, give a nosegay to my wife. I'd have only gentlemen going to be married or wishing to be so, have the privilege of sending nosegays to those they have proposed for, and then flowers would 'be looked on as the messengers of honest, lawful love, instead of sinful."

"Lord love your simple heart, Mary! if that was the case we nurserymen would starve."

When Lord Willamere's *bouquet* was sent to Mrs. Stratford, she was half tempted to return it; but the fear of having the appearance of attaching too much importance to so trifling a gift, and of exciting the remarks of his Lordship's servants, deterred her. For the first time, the sight and perfume of these beautiful offsprings of summer failed to give her pleasure, for, though a passionate admirer of flowers,—and those sent to her were peculiarly fine—they were associated in her mind with the humiliating consciousness that the donor entertained towards her sentiments less accordant with the respect due to a virtuous woman, to which she thought herself entitled, than with the

insolent freedom adopted by libertines to women, who by their levity had encouraged such advances.

Sterne, no mean judge of the female heart, has said, “that a man has seldom an offer of kindness to make to a woman, without her having a presentiment of it some moments before ;” and we would maintain that no married woman, however pure and innocent, has ever had the misfortune—and a serious one it may be deemed—of inspiring a passion in the breast of a man, without suspecting it, even before he has resumed to make the guilty avowal. Let no woman therefore—at least no woman with the quick sense of propriety, peculiar to every one of the sex before being tainted by a contact with the demoralized—plead in extenuation for having her ear insulted by a declaration of unhallowed passion, that “it came unexpectedly on her, that she was not prepared for it;” assertions too often had recourse to by coquettes, whose love of admiration had led them to give a tacit encouragement to such avowals; yet whose prudence induced them to shrink back, alarmed

at the precipice on whose edge they found themselves trembling. Let them remember the verse which truly says,

“He comes too near, who comes to be denied ;”

and be convinced that although a woman may retain sufficient virtue to repel a seducer, she has lost a portion of her purity and dignity in having permitted a declaration of love.

Looking on the flowers before her as a tacit avowal of a more than common interest in seeking to please her, Mrs. Stratford determined not to retain them. But how were they to be disposed of ? She reflected for a few minutes, and, no other plan suggesting itself, she opened the casement of her bedroom and flung the *bouquet* from it. She felt more at ease when it had disappeared, yet she wished that Lord Willamere could know, without her having the ungracious task of informing him, how unvalued had been his gift, and how unwelcome would be any future one. How little did she imagine that the very step she had adopted, had accomplished this wish of hers !

Lord Willamere had gone to his stables—an

unusual occurrence with him—to be present while a veterinary surgeon examined the foot of a favourite horse which had met with an accident, and was returning to his house across the leads at the back of it, when the *bouquet* lying before him attracted his eyes. Was it possible that a gift of *his* had been thus scornfully rejected? Yet it must be so. It was the identical one which an hour before he had sent to Mrs. Stratford, the windows of whose bed-chamber looked out on the leads! Could it have been her husband who in a fit of jealousy had flung them away? There was a salve to his vanity in this supposition, and men always are disposed to believe what most gratifies their besetting foible. Yes, it *must* be that uxorious fool Stratford who threw them away—Mrs. Stratford *had* accepted them, consequently *she* was not likely to have done the deed. Nevertheless, to put an end to all misgivings, he went to the bureau where his secretary was writing, and there sate that individual intent on his occupation, and with a pile of neatly filled pages of *précis* writing,

that proved he had not abandoned his task during his lordship's absence. "You have worked hard to-day, Stratford," observed Lord Willamere.

"Yes, my lord, rather, for I have not quitted my desk since the morning."

"The devil you have not!" thought my lord; "it was she then after all who threw away the flowers! She really provokes me into a perseverance of my efforts to vanquish her prudery, even though I may not prove successful. Had she been as willing to commence a flirtation with me as three parts of the women I meet in society are, I should probably have not felt half so strong a desire to make an impression on her as I now do; but, to be foiled by an obscure governess, the wife too of my secretary, and under my own roof, would be too bad. I should for ever lose my reputation as a *homme des bonnes fortunes*, a reputation now so long and triumphantly sustained; ay, *so long*—there's the devil of it; perhaps it is because I am not so youthful as I was, that I am thus scornfully treated."

And Lord Willamere sighed, and cast a melancholy glance in the small mirror that hung near his desk. How frequently had that same glass showed him the reflection of his own face, when meditating, or flushed with conquest, he had contemplated it with complacency, while latterly, and more especially now, it revealed to him the ravages of the ruthless tyrant Time, denoted by locks besprent with silver; and, oh! how much fewer, and further between, than some summers before; and certain harsh lines around his eyes, vulgarly but expressively denominated crow's-feet. His complexion, too, had somewhat "fallen into the sere and yellow leaf," and the muscles extending from the cheeks to the chin came out in an *alto rilievo*, by no means desirable for a man who still had pretensions to disturb the peace of female hearts.

Yet this humiliating contemplation of his own altered appearance, far from discouraging him to persevere in his attempts to conquer the affections of Mrs. Stratford, only served to pique his vanity into achieving it. Yes, he would prove, that he was still, though a less

handsome, quite as dangerous a man as ever; and he who had vanquished so many high-born dames, would not have the mortification of being defeated by a mere nobody, who, though certainly extremely beautiful, could not be a conquest to make any sensation in society. *A-propos*, of high-born dames, he remembered that he had in his pocket an unopened letter from the Duchess of Roschampton. He had received it some hours before, when on the point of mounting his horse to go and buy the *bouquet* for her who had so scornfully flung it away, and had ever since forgotten it as completely as its writer. "Full of reproaches, I dare say," thought he, as he now opened the billet, embossed with a ducal coronet in gold and redolent with perfume. "Yes, the old story: where have I been? what have I been doing? and why has she not seen, or heard from me? 'Time was when I counted the hours that kept me from her, but now—not even a *bouquet* for three whole days.' Yes, yes, the old story," thought Lord Willamere, as he tore the billet into atoms, "'Time was,' so they all say. How

many billets with the same reproaches have I not received. By Jove! one might imagine all were written by the same hand, so precisely similar are they. It is odd, that, with so much imagination, women should not possess the power of varying their phrases on such occasions, instead of always writing the self-same reproaches.

“The poor duchess! I wish I had thought of buying her some heart’s-ease to-day; she needs it, if I may trust her letter. The fellow, too, reminded me that he had procured some. But how the devil can a man remember to buy a *bouquet* for one woman, when his whole thoughts are occupied by another? I am half tempted to send her the one so scornfully rejected by her rival: but, no, that won’t do, for she is so quick-sighted that she would instantly divine that it was designed for some one else, so I must not increase the jealousy that I see by her letter is already awakened in her breast. The poor duchess! I could really pity her, when I remember how passionately, how madly I once loved her, making her believe, ay, by Jove! and

believing myself also at the time, that our love was to endure for ever ! But what is a poor devil of a fellow to do, when satiety and indifference take the place of passion, the never-failing result of a successful one ? Of all ghosts, defend me from the ghost of departed love, which haunts one, to scare away the hopes and joys that usher in a new attachment. Well, I suppose I must call on the poor duchess. It will be some consolation for the wound just inflicted on my *amour propre* by Mrs. Stratford, to see one of the most admired of our aristocratic beauties, and the leader of fashion too, pale from anxiety occasioned by my absence, and delighted to see me again. Poor duchess ! how many men envy me your smiles, and would give half their possessions to exchange places with me in your favour, while I, for three whole days, have forgotten your existence, and am only reminded of it by a letter filled with tender reproaches ? ‘Willamere, Willamere, you’re a sad dog !’ and here the coxcomb again glanced in the mirror ; “ how many women’s hearts have you not vanquished,

while the stupid world believed you were engaged only on protocols, and defeating the tactics of foreign diplomatists? Oh! the relief of flying from the dry details of official duty, to the elegant boudoir, redolent of perfume, of some lovely creature, *fière* and haughty to every man save yourself; in whose presence one can forget the wily arts of contemporary political opponents, and the crooked policy of other nations! Yes, I flatter myself, that I have shone in the cabinet as well as in the boudoir," and Lord Willamere drew up his head, and arranged his well-tied neckcloth. "People are mistaken, when they fancy that a handsome man, and a well-dressed one too, seldom makes a good man of business. I have proved the fallacy of this opinion, and I defy any one to say that while indulging in *affaires de cœur*, I have neglected *les affaires de tête*."

## CHAPTER IV.

“MAY I claim a few moments of your lordship’s time?” asked Lord Willamere’s secretary, with a timid and embarrassed air, when *tête-à-tête* next day with his employer.

“Certainly, certainly,” was the answer; but his lordship’s countenance betrayed some confusion as he seated himself.

“The creditors, my lord, have been very clamorous of late, and threaten to put executions into the house.”

“You have told them, I suppose, that such a step would be unavailing?” replied Lord Willamere, his countenance assuming its usual expression of dignified calmness. The truth was, he feared Mr. Stratford was about to speak to him on a subject that interested him infinitely more than his debts, namely, the wife of the said

secretary ; for the old proverb, “a guilty conscience needs no accuser,” was verified in his case, and his equanimity became restored when he found that it was only about his creditors that he was to be spoken to.

“Yes, my lord, I told them that your furniture, plate, books, &c. were assigned over to another creditor. They then declared their intention of seizing your carriages and horses, when I assured them that both were jobbed ; on which they got very angry, and said they would at least endeavour to annoy your lordship by exposure, for they would have executions, and seizures made, and afterwards try the cases in court.”

“This, Stratford, would, I confess, be anything but agreeable. You must see these harpies again: temporise with them if you can ; if not, we must raise some more money by bills, a thing I don’t like if it can be avoided.”

“It is a ruinous system, my lord, and as likely eventually to lead to exposure as the measure it is meant to prevent.”

“Well, see what you can do with these

people, Stratford; talk them over, promise them that in a year, or, if that will not do, six months, they shall be paid."

"I have so often held out promises never realized, that they no longer put faith in what I say;" and Stratford changed colour at the consciousness of having not only lost the respect of Lord Willamere's creditors, but his own too, by having deluded them with false promises.

"Something must turn up," resumed his lordship, "in the course of the next six months to enable me to pay a portion at least, of the debts, to these troublesome people."

"Ay, so you have said every six months of the last seven years," thought his secretary, "and with no better prospect of the realization of such unfounded hope than at present." But he did not give utterance to this thought, for his was too delicate a mind to add to his patron's annoyances by aught like a reproach. Again, Lord Willamere arose to depart, and once more his secretary begged him to stay for a few minutes, but this time the request was made

with much more diffidence and embarrassment of manner than before. "If not *very* inconvenient to your lordship, might I solicit some money on my own account? As a married man, I have more occasion for money than formerly."

"Very true, my good Stratford; and *your* wants must be the first attended to. But at this moment I happen to be poorer than usual. I can only spare you ten pounds; but in a few days you shall have more."

His lordship gave a cheque on his banker for the money, rather wincing while he did so, as the recollection crossed his mind, that only a few pounds more of his remained in the said banker's hands, and that his next quarter's salary was already half anticipated. "If my time were not so wholly occupied by official business and *affaires de cœur*," thought he, as he drove in his cabriolet to the Duchess of Rosehampton's, "I should be hipped to death by my pecuniary embarrassments. By Jove! they are enough to torment a man out of his senses if he had time to think of them. Luckily for

me I have not, so the *onus* falls on Stratford. I wish he had not taken my ten pounds just now, though, for he has scarcely left me a sovereign for my *menus plaisirs*. *A-propos* of sovereigns, what a blessing it is to have one, —not the golden effigy, though that in the plural number, to a large amount, is not to be found fault with; but a *bonâ fide* sovereign of flesh and blood, requiring ministers, ay, and paying them well too, through the assistance of Parliament, making them feel satisfied when every quarter-day comes round, if they are so on no other."

Here his lordship's soliloquy was stopped by his arrival at Rosehampton House. He threw the reins on the splash-board of the cabriolet, while his diminutive cab boy ran to the horse's head, which even on tiptoes he could scarcely reach, and his master, descending from the vehicle, ascended the steps.

An accurate observer might have noticed that there was much less elasticity in his step, and much less animation in his countenance, than on former visits to this mansion, and

these symptoms might have revealed the state of his feelings towards its noble mistress.

“ Well, I see’d a funny thing this ’ere day, William,” said Lord Willamere’s upper housemaid to his lordship’s groom, as they met in the servants’ hall to have a sociable cup of tea together, on the evening of the day that the *bouquet* had been bought at the nursery garden.

“ And what did you see, Hannah ? ”

“ Why, I see’d his lordship pick up as fine a nosegay as ever I looked upon in all my born days, as he was a crossing the leads coming in from the stable ; and, what’s more, I see’d Mrs. Stratford, not five minutes before, throw the same nosegay out of her window. I can’t be sworn that I see’d her face, but I see’d her hand, and a precious small white vone it is for the matter of that, as it pitched the flowers out. Thinks I to myself, you might give them ’ere flowers to a poor servant, if how be it you did not like to keep ’em yourself, instead of throwing ’em out on the leads to be spoilt ; but when I see’s his Lordship pick them up and carry them into the house, marry come

up, says I, you might have sent my lord the nosegay civilly, and not throw 'em out of the window to fall in his way. Some people are so handsome, that they think other people must be sure to admire 'em, and be glad to pick up the flowers they throw out of the window; but I knows what I knows, and I'm no blinder than others; and when some people are asked to dine with lords, just for all the world as if they were born ladies instead of only being governesses, it is not for nothing I'm certain."

"How your tongue does run on, Hannah, to be sure, twenty-four to the dozen at least. Why, my lord bought a nosegay at the nurseryman's to day; and, what's more, paid a golden sovereign for it, for I saw him pull it out of his waistcoat pocket and throw it down on the counter; and moreover, I thought to myself, it's no wonder we poor servants can't get our wages, when our masters give a sovereign for a nosegay."

"Lord! William, you don't say so! Is it possible that any one would give twenty shillings, a whole month of my wages, for a few flowers?"

“Little you know, Hannah, what lords and gentlemen will do when the fancy takes them; Lord help you, they think no more of money than of dust.”

“Ay, William, and that’s the reason that so many of ’em comes to want it. But what became of the nosegay his lordship bought?”

“I brought it home wrapped up in paper and handed it at the door to the porter.”

“And I took it from the porter, and carried it with his lordship’s compliments to Mrs. Stratford,” said a footman who had heard the conversation between the house-maid and groom.

“Then as sure as day,” exclaimed William, “it was the nosegay my lord sent her that she threw out of the window.”

“You may be sure,” said the footman, “for I noticed that she did not seem much pleased with the present, for she hesitated a minute before she took it from my hands; and looked as if she had more than half a mind to send it back.”

“Well, the himperance of some people!

where will it stop? Throw a nosegay that cost twenty shillings, and was sent her by a lord; and her husband's master, and hers too, as a body may say, out of the window! She ought to be ashamed of herself!"

"Perhaps she wished to show his lordship that she cared neither for him or his nosegay," remarked Thomas, the footman. "And that's my hopinion, for I saw, the day she dined with my Lord, that he was continually looking at her; and well he might for the matter of that, for a handsomer face, or a more helegant figure I have seldom see'd."

"Then you must have been blind, Mr. Thomas," exclaimed Hannah with warmth, "for, to my thinking, Mrs. Stratford is anything but ansome. Why she has no more colour in her cheeks than a white rose with just a little pink shade in the middle; and her eyelashes are so long, that one can hardly see the colour of her eyes; and her hair is jet black—I can't abide black hair," (Hannah had red,) "and she's moreover so distant, and so shy like, that there's nothing free and easy about her, as there

was in the governess at my last place. Ah ! Miss Cullen was a very different person, so full of fun and frolic. She'd come down when master and mistress were out and the children asleep, and play blind-man's-buff in the servants' hall with us as pleasant as possible, and we were all as free with her, as if she were one of ourselves."

"All that's mighty well, Hannah ; but to my thinking, governesses as don't know their places, aren't fit for 'em. They aren't hired to romp in the servants' hall, but to attend to the learning and behaviour of the children entrusted to their care. A governess ought to be as much like a lady as possible ; and as for Mrs. Stratford, I'm sure I never see'd a lady more genteel."

"Marry come up, Mr. Thomas, who made you such a judge of ladies ?"

"Waiting on 'em, Mrs. Hannah, to be sure. Servants who wait at table, have a good opportunity of judging of those who think no more of their presence than if they were stocks or stones ; and I have often formed my own hopinions while they were eating and chatting."

“Well, you may think as you like, Mr. Thomas, but you’ll never get me to believe it was ladylike in Mrs. Stratford to throw his lordship’s flowers out of window, and in his own house too. What do *you* think, Sally?”

This question was addressed to a very pretty young woman who had entered while Thomas was speaking, and who filled the situation of under-housemaid.

“Ay, Sally, do you think that if my lord sent a nosegay to Mrs. Stratford, and that she thought it wasn’t right to keep it, it was wrong of her to throw it out of the window?” demanded Thomas, with an air of anxiety.

“I don’t see what else she could do with it, Thomas. If she kept it, it would, to my thinking, be like saying she approved of my lord’s attention.”

“Right, Sally, right,” exclaimed Thomas, with a look of great satisfaction; “I was sure *you* would think as I do.”

“Well, if I was my lord,” said Hannah, “I’d see Mrs. Stratford far enough, I can tell her, before I’d send her any nosegays at a

sovereign a piece. What's she, that she's to be made so much of, I should like to know?"

"She's a well behaved, *virtuous* woman, that's what she is, Hannah, who wishes to keep her own place, and let my lord keep his; and if she can manage that, it will be no easy matter, for his lordship can never see a handsome face without trying to make a fool of the owner, and more shame for him."

Thomas glanced so expressively at the blushing face of pretty Sally, that it was clear his indignation at his lord's laxity of morals was not wholly disinterested; while Hannah, growing red with anger, declared, "that for her part, she never had nothink whatsomedever to say against his lordship; though she'd met him many's the time in the dressing and bed-room, he'd never been himperant to her; though other people," and she glanced spitefully at pretty Sally, "were always trying to keep out of his way;" an assertion the truth of which no one present seemed disposed to question.

While Lord Willamere was devising schemes to seduce the wife of his secretary, unchecked

by one feeling of remorse, that unhappy man was submitting to the humiliation of going to creditor after creditor, in order to talk them over into waiting another year, or even six months, for the settlement of their accounts; conscious all the while, that there existed no more likelihood of their being paid at the termination of the time demanded, than at the present. So often had these promises been made, and so ill kept, that the patience of the creditors of Lord Willamere was exhausted, and the reproaches, which they were denied an opportunity of uttering to his lordship, were directed with unsparing acerbity to his secretary.

“I’ll tell you what, Mr. Stratford, you can no longer make me believe that if Lord Willamere had the principle to pay, he could not find the means,” said Mr. Bloxam, the butcher. “Why what becomes of his salary? Ay, tell me that. Havn’t I been renewing his bills till I’m tired of ’em? *I* must pay for my meat, and why shouldn’t he?”

This was only a specimen of the scenes

which Stratford had to go through with all the persons who served the establishment of Lord Willamere. The servants, too, demanded their long arrears of wages in a tone that might have conveyed their belief that Mr. Stratford alone was answerable for the delay ; and the tradespeople to whom he was indebted for the supply of his own wants,—wants limited to the strict necessities of life,—had now also become importunate.

He would return in an evening, fatigued in body and depressed in mind, to seek consolation from the partner of his joys and sorrows ; but, alas ! the joys were “like angel visits, few and far between,” while the cares were of daily and increasing occurrence. In vain did his fond wife endeavour to soothe his broken spirits, and to render their frugal meals cheerful. The privations and discomforts, which, in spite of her attempts to conceal them, were but too apparent, were now more severely felt than if he alone had to bear them ; and his affection for her doubly increased his acute sense of the hardships of their lot.

Bitterly did he now reproach himself for his selfishness in withdrawing her from comparative comfort to almost positive want; and when he learned that she was in a state likely to make him a father in some months hence, the tidings that under happier circumstances would have filled his heart with gladness, now only added to his gloom. His Emily, never blessed with robust health, became more delicate every day, and evidently required comforts which his poverty precluded the possibility of his providing for her. Her resignation, and her attempts to maintain a cheerfulness under a complication of evils that would have tested the firmness of a stoic, often brought tears to his eyes; and as he beheld her during the long evenings, occupied in converting her own slender stock of clothes into habiliments for their unborn infant, he would reflect with many a pang, how her scanty wardrobe now melting away was to be replenished, and how so frail a form was to suffice for the maternal duties and housewifery cares his idolized Emily would be called on to fulfil. What, too,

would be the fate of their poor child? Was it to be doomed to pine through the vicissitudes of a dreary life of dependence, making its unfortunate parents reflect with still more bitterness on a union, that, were they but blessed with a modest competency, they would have felt to be indeed a blissful one? Poverty! thou gaunt spectre, whose approach fills all with dread; who frightest away summer friends even more rapidly than winter chases away the poor insects that basked in sunshine, never art thou so terrible, as when we behold thy chilling results on those dearer to us than life itself, and yet have not the power to ward off thy presence!

Lord Willamere had not desisted from his evil intentions towards the wife of his secretary, although foiled in his repeated attempts to find an opportunity of carrying them into effect. Many had been the visits offered, and the invitations to dinner given on his part to Mr. and Mrs. Stratford; but the ill health of the latter offered so strong a plea for rejecting both, that, although he was unwillingly compelled to

postpone following up his schemes against her honour, he was by no means disposed to abandon them. Often would he send the most rare and costly fruit to the invalid, purchased at a price that would have abundantly supplied the substantial comforts and necessities of which she stood in so much need; but what knew he of the privations which his extravagance and recklessness entailed on those who depended on him for subsistence? *He* never experienced any privations, save the temporary want of some useless luxury or expensive bauble, which, when his finances were low, he might have denied himself for some time, but which, when his purse was again filled, he indulged himself in. That any one beneath his roof should be in actual want of a substantial, if not a dainty meal, never once entered his thoughts, and, if it had, he would in all probability have pronounced the person a fool, for not seeking, as *he* did, the supply of all wants by rushing into debt, without ever thinking how such debts were to be discharged. The fact was, Lord Willamere avoided as much as possible ever reflecting on

disagreeable subjects, and piqued himself not a little on this proof of his epicurean philosophy. *He* fared luxuriously every day, either at the tables of his friends, or at his own, and it never occurred to him, that the woman he most admired, and the man he most trusted, had barely sufficient food to support existence.

A portion of the next quarter's salary having been allotted to the tradespeople who supplied Willamere House, they consented to renew once more the bills of his lordship, already so often renewed; but on the proviso that his secretary should indorse them.

"The impudent scoundrels!" exclaimed Lord Willamere. "But of course, Stratford, you'll sign them. It is a mere matter of form insisted on by these harpies to pique me."

"If I possessed the means to meet the bills when due, readily, my lord, would I indorse them; but it strikes me that, as there is no probability of this being the case, it would not be honest on my part to do so."

"Really this is carrying your scruples to a very absurd extent, Stratford. It is not what

I looked for in a man whom I believed perfectly devoted to my interests. The moment you refuse what these rascals require, you will have inflicted a mortal wound on my credit; for they will naturally enough say, ‘Why his bills can be worth nothing when his own secretary, who best knows his affairs, will not indorse them.’”

This argument was irresistible with Stratford, not that his conscience was at all convinced by it, but that he saw his refusal would not only seriously offend Lord Willamere, but totally destroy his already straitened credit with his tradespeople. He signed the bills, and from that moment became haunted with the dread that he had committed an act that would entail misery on him at no distant day; and this addition to his troubles achieved the ruin of his health, already greatly impaired by constant anxiety and privations.

## CHAPTER V.

QUICKLY did his doting wife detect the change in her husband's aspect. His heavy eyes, pale and haggard cheeks, and the sickly smile that tried to re-assure her, when alarmed by these symptoms she tremblingly questioned their cause, but too well convinced her that the pressure of hard necessity at present, and the dread of actual want hereafter, were preying on his life. And this,—this was the sad result of her compliance with his long, and often reiterated prayers for her consent to their union! Oh! why had she yielded to it, against the dictates of her own better judgment. Had their marriage brought happiness to *him*, she would have borne with fortitude all the privations induced by poverty. But when did happiness and poverty dwell together? Does not the former,

terrified, quickly fly away, when the latter shows its grim face? Alas, yes! How brief had been their felicity! A few halcyon days, and now cankering cares had scared away peace; and Love,—Love only, had remained to confront the dire spectre Poverty. And was not Love itself, in this cruel position, an addition to their misery? Did it not, in the pity, the anxiety it awakened in their breasts for each other, aggravate, ten-fold, their sufferings? Could she have experienced, for herself alone, one half the inquietude, the sleepless, agonizing inquietude, that filled her tortured heart for him? Ah, no! well she knew she could not, and were *he* but exempted from the hardships of their position, *she* could bear them without a murmur. Such were the bitter reflections that continually filled the minds of both husband and wife; increasing their mutual tenderness to an almost morbid state of exaltation, which like a fever preyed upon their lives, and prostrated their mental energies.

When the time for his wife's *accouchement* drew near, Mr. Stratford demanded from Lord

Willamere for her use, the money, which for his own, a delicacy amounting to weakness would have precluded him from urging.

“How unfortunate that you did not ask me yesterday, my good fellow,” replied his lordship; “but as my ill luck would have it, I lost last night at whist all the money I had, and was just thinking of asking you to look out for some one who would cash a bill for me. If you know any one who will do so, your wants shall be the first attended to from the produce.”

There was something so like a bribe, to do that which he so much disliked, held out in the promise that his wants should be the first attended to, that Stratford’s sensitiveness was wounded, and there was a self-respect, almost amounting to dignity of manner, in his air, when he declared that, however pressing his wants were, he preferred bearing the annoyance to continuing a system so ruinous to his lordship, as that of raising money at such exorbitant interest.

“*Your* wants, Stratford, must then be much less pressing than *mine*, the relief for which cannot, I am sorry to say, be postponed,”

replied Lord Willamere, "so you must assist me on this occasion. I am going to the country to-morrow, to stay a few days at the Duke of Evandale's, and money I must have."

"Could he but see, and hear the conversation of the man to whom he sends me to borrow money," thought Stratford, as he wended his way to a money-lender in Chancery Lane, "he would be less ready to have recourse to such men, and more careful in managing his resources. Where will all this end?"

This was a question that often presented itself to his mind of late, when on his sleepless pillow he reflected with alarm on the heavy liabilities he had incurred for Lord Willamere, and remembered the utter carelessness of that nobleman in all pecuniary matters, as well as his own total inability to meet any portion of them. At last he reached the house of Mr. Solomons, and after waiting half-an-hour in a dark and dingy room, ill ventilated, and containing only three or four rickety chairs, and a table covered with a cloth, on which various devices were scrawled with ink, and sundry

spots of grease, and stains of wine or beer were visible, he was summoned to the *sanctum* of Mr. Solomons, and ushered there by a lad of some sixteen years old, whose pale and elongated face spoke as ill for the larder of his employer, as his thread-bare and greasy coat did for his liberality in providing him with clothing.

“So here you are again, Mr. Stratford,” exclaimed Mr. Solomons, his coarse mouth relaxing into an ironical smile; “I didn’t expect to see you here so soon, after all you said against raising money by bills. I hope you ain’t come here for any such purpose now, for two reasons: first, I don’t like to see a gentleman act contrary to his conscience, and you said it went against yours to pay fifty per cent. for raising money; and secondly, never was cash so scarce in the city as at present—no getting it, I can assure you. Why there’s my Lord Duke of Deloraine has told me, he won’t object to paying sixty, ay, or even sixty-five per cent. if I can get his grace five thousand pounds for six months. ‘Can’t be done, my lord duke,’

says I:—‘Must be done, Mr. Solomons,’ says he, ‘for I positively want the money.’—‘I might manage it at *three* months, your grace,’ says I, ‘but at six months I couldn’t do it for Her Majesty herself, if she required it.’—‘Well, at three months then I suppose it must be,’ says his grace; and I managed it at sixty-five per cent., but it is not for every one I could or would have done it, I can tell you.”

“I want cash for a bill of Lord Willamere’s for two hundred and fifty pounds, Mr. Solomons, and require it to be at six months.”

“Quite out of the question, sir, quite out of the question. You may suppose that if I refused my Lord Duke of Deloraine, one of the best customers I have, a nobleman that never makes the slightest objection to any rate of interest I demand, I am not likely to do it for Lord Willamere, who sends you here huckstering and beating down my terms in a manner that is by no means the one I like to do business in.”

The blood mounted to the temples of poor Stratford, while he listened to this coarse re-

proach, but he felt that it would not be prudent to resent it; for well did he know, that ill-disposed as was Mr. Solomons to lend the required accommodation, the other money-lenders with whom he had dealt for Lord Willamere, were still less inclined to discount his bills. "Will you tell me at once, Mr. Solomons, what you *will* accept for cashing a bill at three months, and whether or not, I may count on you renewing it at the expiration of that term, for as many more months?"

"Well then, Mr. Stratford, at a word, I am ready to find you the money, (you are of course aware I have no funds myself,) at sixty-five per cent, and a *douceur* for myself for the renewal. I will not be unreasonable; twenty-five pounds will satisfy me, but less than that I will not take."

"I must consult Lord Willamere, before I can accept such very extravagant conditions."

"And extravagant as you are pleased to consider them, I may not be in the humour to offer them again. Money was never so scarce in the market. Every one wants it, and I have at present no less than eight noblemen on my list,

who will give me a higher rate of interest than Lord Willamere."

Stratford returned to his patron's, and acquainted him with the hard conditions named by Mr. Solomons, adding, that to accept them would be little short of madness.

"We must, nevertheless, do so, my good fellow," replied Lord Willamere; "there is no help for it; for, since you left this, confidently counting on your accomplishing the loan, I have bought a very fine horse, which was brought here for me to see, and the dealer insists on having ready money for him. I have made a capital bargain, for I have got him to take a hundred and fifty less, in consideration of paying him ready money. He refused selling him for two hundred and fifty to Lord George Devereux, who offered him a bill at six months. You must therefore go back to Solomons, and close with him on his own terms. I wish you had done so at once, for I want the money confoundedly."

The bill was cashed, Mr. Solomons making a great merit of not having swerved from his conditions, which he declared he considered

himself fully warranted in doing, owing to Mr. Stratford not having at once closed with them; but he took care to retain the sixty-five per cent. interest in advance, in spite of all Stratford's remonstrances to the contrary, saying, he always of late made a point of it, to prevent his clients suffering from the unpunctuality of noblemen and gentlemen.

This deduction so far diminished the sum raised, that, when it was handed over to Lord Willamere, he uttered "curses not loud, but deep," on the grasping scoundrel, as he termed Mr. Solomons; and avowed that now, however he might regret it, 'it was totally out of his power to appropriate any portion of it to the wants of his secretary. "Devilish sorry, Stratford; but I can't help it, I can't, by Jove! It can't make much difference to you, whether you have the money now or in a fortnight hence. A devilish great bore to be compelled to give up the horse too! hang that rascal Solomons. I must send my groom to say I have changed my mind about the horse, and won't buy him."

That evening the poor secretary wandered into a remote street to the house of a pawnbroker which he had often noticed in his rambles, and there raised ten guineas on his gold watch and chain, worth thrice that sum, in order that the hour of trial of his wife, now daily expected, should not find him penniless; and when he returned to her, he endeavoured to assume a cheerful aspect as he pressed her to his heart. He assisted her with almost feminine forethought and activity in preparing for the little stranger, whose birth they anticipated with trembling anxiety; and having secured the attendance of the nurse of his wife, a respectable and attached though humble friend, he waited with a trepidation known only to those who feel that the object dearer to them than life is in danger, the event so long looked forward to.

The following night I opened my eyes on this world of care, and was as fondly pressed to the breast of my poor father, as if I were the heiress to broad lands and a long line of ancient ancestry. The extreme delicacy of my mother's

health induced her medical adviser to prohibit her attempting to nurse; and the narrow circumstances of my parents precluding them from engaging a wet nurse, my mother determined on rearing me by hand. Her health seemed to revive; and when she left her sick chamber, the few who saw her, thought her looking more beautiful than ever. Lord Willamere offered himself as sponsor to the infant; and his kind sister, Lady Altonbury, proposed being the godmother. When he paid his first visit to the young mother, her increased loveliness re-awakened the evil thoughts that had been slumbering in his mind since her arrival beneath his roof. He tried that generally sure road to a mother's heart, praises of her infant, and, affecting to admire children, pronounced that I was one of the prettiest he had ever seen. Flattered by his commendations of me, and thinking that in her new character of a mother, Lord Willamere would find more to respect than admire, in a woman wholly occupied by her husband and child, she forgot that she had ever seen aught in his manner that indicated

any sentiment of a more personal nature on his part towards her; and she consequently evinced less reserve in her reception of him, although the most rigid and scrupulous disciplinarian in female decorum could have detected nothing to censure in her manner.

• Women, far less pure-minded and reserved than Mrs. Stratford, find, on first becoming a mother, a material change in their feelings and notions. There is something so purifying, so sacred in maternity, that its benign influence corrects vanity and sobers down levity. Unhappily, circumstances too often occur which abridge the duration of this holy influence, but few can deny that it has existed. Many a vain coquette has forgotten self in the love excited for her offspring, and has felt more gratified by the admiration bestowed on its beauty, than by all the commendations ever given to her own. If such is the effect produced by maternity on minds of ordinary stamp, its result on one of so superior a nature as Mrs. Stratford's, may easily be imagined. A woman of the most advanced age could not have supposed herself more wholly

out of the pale of libertine pursuits than she did now, when to her matronly character was added that of a mother. Deeply impressed with a sense of the sacred duties this new tie involved, she, in the innocence of her heart, believed that it invested her in the eyes of others with as holy a shield from sinful thoughts as it did in her own. Hence the change in her manner, which, although less formal and reserved, was nevertheless all that decorum and female dignity could desire.

Lady Altonbury came to London expressly to answer at the baptismal font for the little stranger, and the knowledge so fully impressed on the mind of Mrs. Stratford of the seriousness and importance which that amiable and excellent lady attached to the duties of a godmother, was a source of comfort to her, now that Lady Altonbury had undertaken them for her child. On the day of the christening, Lord Willamere voluntarily promised his secretary, that all his influence should be exerted to procure him an appointment the first vacancy that occurred; and this unsolicited pledge on his part would

have convinced Mrs. Stratford, had any doubt still remained in her mind, that he no longer entertained any warmer sentiment than good will towards herself.

Not long, however, was she suffered to remain in this belief. Lord Willamere, under the plea of coming to inquire after the health of his god-daughter, sought occasions to visit her; and although he never did so without apprising his secretary, carelessly saying, "I will just step up and see Mrs. Stratford and my little god-child," both husband and wife began to find that these calls were more frequent than they wished, and heartily longed for the promised appointment, which would enable them to leave a house where they could not be safe from the intrusion of the owner.

And now the time drew near when the bills indorsed by Stratford were to fall due: he reminded Lord Willamere of the fact, and urged as strongly as he could the necessity of making a provision to meet them. They had been once renewed as had been agreed on, but Mr. Solomons had on that occasion frankly

declared his intention of not again granting their renewal. When told of this, Lord Willamere had assured his secretary that the money should be forthcoming, but these repeated assurances had failed to remove the anxiety that haunted him. Too well were his worst fears justified when, the day the bills fell due, Lord Willamere confessed his inability to meet them, and advised Stratford to leave town, or conceal himself in some obscure corner of it until he could obtain money to satisfy Mr. Solomons. The advice came too late. While the poor secretary was meditating where he should go to, and how to break this annoying intelligence to his wife, at that moment greatly distressed by the illness of her child, he was arrested. Lord Willamere was absent at the House of Lords, when this mortifying event occurred. His lordship's solicitor, to whom Stratford wrote, was not to be found; and the sheriff's officer, after waiting an hour at the request of his prisoner, and seeing that further delay was not likely to tend to any advantages to himself, peremptorily insisted on his accompanying him to his abode,

there to wait until Lord Willamere's solicitor could be found. Dreading to have an interview with his wife under the distressing circumstances of the moment, he wrote a few lines to her, to be delivered in case he did not return at night, left a note, detailing the state of the case, for Lord Willamere, and then resigned himself to his fate.

"I suppose, Sir, as how you would wish for us to go to Serle Street in a carriage?" said Mr. Moses.

"As you please," replied the inexperienced Stratford.

"No, sir; not as I, but as you pleases. It bain't nothing to me whatsomnever to be seen going along the streets with *you*; but 'twill do your credit no good, I can tell you, for *you* to be seen with *me*. I'm well known, though I say it as shouldn't say it perhaps, for being the smartest man in my profession in all London. I'm always picked out for doing business with gentlemen at the west end of the town; and gentlemen as are really of the right sort, never find me uncivil, or against granting 'em every accommodation as lies in my power;

provided they can afford it and are willing to pay for it."

"Let us have a carriage, then," said the secretary; and one being called, he and his accommodating companion entered it, and were driven off to Serle Street.

Misfortunes, though long anticipated, fall not less heavily when they arrive. How often had a presentiment of the event that had now occurred, haunted Stratford during the last six months, and chased sleep from his pillow; nevertheless the realization of his fears overwhelmed him, as much as if he had never previously thought of its probability. His wife, his child—the latter, too, ill and suffering, and its anxious mother, so much needing his presence to support and comfort her! What would be his Emily's feelings when she should learn the truth? and that she must learn it he felt but too assured, for he knew that at that moment Lord Willamere, however he might wish to release him from durance, had not the funds at command to do so; and his knowledge of his lordship's solicitor, Mr. Spelman, did

not encourage him to hope that *he* would put himself to any inconvenience or trouble to extricate him, even though well aware that it was solely for the accommodation of his lordship, that his secretary had indorsed the bills.

“Well, he’s safe off, that’s certain,” said Mr. Bermingham, the *maître d’hôtel* of Lord Willamere, as he saw from the window of his private room the carriage that contained Mr. Stratford and the sheriff’s officer drive away. “I kept out of the way lest he should ask me to return him the sovereign he advanced me this morning. I saw he had no more in his purse; and I got that out of him by telling him there was not a shilling in the house to pay for letters or parcels. And not far from the truth neither, for the other servants haven’t seen a farthing of their wages for the last six months, and I have taken good care not to keep a sixpence of mine by me. No, no; the minute I lay my hand on a five-pound note, I go off and lodge it in safe hands, where I can get interest for it. No one shall catch me advancing a shilling for my lord. I’m not such a fool.

And I owe Mr. Stratford no obligations, I'm sure. Quite the contrary, for he's a regular skin-flint, and tries all he can to prevent me from having any profits out of my place. I could make a much better thing out of it if *he* were not in the house, looking after the cellar book, and doing a hundred other mean things, for which he'll get but little thanks in the end, as I know. Why, the poor devil and his pretty wife half starve themselves rather than go in debt, and are too proud to touch any of my lord's things. More fools they, say I."

Sally, the under-housemaid, as good-natured as she was pretty, had, from the moment of Mrs. Stratford's arrival at Willamere House, taken a great liking to that lady. She had noticed the severe system of economy adhered to by the young couple, and with a quickness of perception peculiar to her sex, had divined the sentiments of Lord Willamere towards Mrs. Stratford; and had observed the reserve with which his attentions were treated.

"Yes," thought pretty Sally, "Mrs. Stratford is a virtuous and well-conducted lady, and

it goes to my heart to see the straits to which she and her husband are driven. I'm sure they hardly eat enough to keep body and soul together; and she's always trying to save me trouble by doing every thing she can to keep her rooms neat and clean. It's a pity to see true lovers so ill off;" and Sally heaved a deep sigh, partly from pity for my mother, and partly because she was reminded, by the case of my parents, of the consequences that result from improvident marriages, the dread of which had alone rendered her, for the last year, obdurate to the pleadings of Thomas the footman for their union. "Yes, it's a terrible thing to see the person one loves wanting the comforts to which he or she has been accustomed," thought Sally; "and then to have a poor baby to face this cold hard-working world, without any thing to leave for its support, if death should snatch away its parents!"

## CHAPTER VI.

THE interest excited in Sally's breast for my mother led her continually to the chamber she occupied to perform a thousand little services and acts of kindness. She was ever ready to go of errands, to execute commissions, to take charge of the bread, butter, milk, and meat, brought to the house for the use of the young couple; and took especial care that no portion of any of these articles should be abstracted, a thing certain to have occurred, had she not interfered to prevent it. Thomas, too, lent his aid to protect the *comestibles* designed for the little *menage* on the second floor, and united with his beloved Sally in rendering every service in his power to my parents.

No sooner had he been made aware of the arrest of my father,—and the news was

quickly spread through the house,—than he communicated it to his sweetheart.

“Oh, my!” exclaimed Sally, “what a terrible blow to the poor lady! and the dear little baby so ill too! They did not get a wink of sleep all night, I’m sure, the poor child wailed so much; and, although I got up and went to their room to help to nurse it, or be of use, Mrs. Stratford wouldn’t let me sit up. Ah! Thomas, you see what a sad thing it is for people to marry before they have laid by a little to make them comfortable!”

“So you are always saying, Sally; and yet time passes away, and our youth goes with it, while we are trying to scrape together a little sum to have to depend on in case of illness. It often makes me gloomy, Sally, when I think how long we’ll have to wait; although I’m sure we do all we can to save money. We have neither of us tasted beer the last year, nor taken sugar in our tea, out of economy, yet how little it adds to our savings.”

“Don’t say so, Thomas. It will make a good many shillings at the year’s end; and

besides, leaving off sugar and beer now will enable us to do without them always. Do we feel a bit the worse, Thomas, since we left them off?"

"No, certainly, Sally; and for my part I think I feel better; but then, our fellow-servants jeer us, and that sometimes makes me half ashamed."

"You men, you men, Thomas, havn't half the courage of us women in such matters! *We* don't mind being jeered, when we know it's for a good cause. But, Lord bless me, here are we gossiping all this while, instead of doing our work. I'll just run up and see if I can't be of some use to Mrs. Stratford. Poor lady, how I pity her!"

"And I'll ask Mr. Bermingham's leave to get out for an hour or two, and run to Serle Street, to where I heard the bailiff order the fly to be driven."

"Do, dear Thomas. It will be a comfort to poor Mr. Stratford to see some face that he knows in that dismal prison. Oh! it makes me tremble to think of the poor gentleman shut up with iron bars on every side!"

“It’s not quite so bad as that yet, Sally ; for they have taken him first of all to what they call a ‘lock-up house,’ where I’ll go and see if he wants me to take any letters for him. So good bye, dear Sally. Do now give me your hand, there’s a dear. Ah ! you don’t know how I love you !”

“Well, you may be sure I’m not ungrateful, Thomas,” was the reply, as the blushing Sally withdrew her hand from the fond grasp of her lover, and hurried from the spot.

On approaching the door of my mother’s chamber, she heard the voice of Mrs. Hannah, the upper housemaid, in that quarter. The circumstance was so unusual, for Mrs. Hannah was known, all through the house, to bear no good-will to the secretary or his wife, that Sally instantly guessed that her present visit was to convey the evil intelligence of the husband’s arrest to his poor wife. Yet she felt almost angry with herself for the suspicion, and thought, “No, bad and ill-natured as Hannah is, she wouldn’t have the heart to do that, neither.”

Her fears, however, were confirmed, when the door opening to admit the retreat of the sour-tempered Mrs. Hannah, she heard her say, "Yes, ma'am, a prison is a very dreadful place, indeed. Not as I know from experience, for, God be thanked, neither I nor any one belonging to me was ever in one, but I've been told, that the poor prisoners are all locked up in dark cells with iron bars, and handcuffed, and chained to the wall, and fed on black bread and musty water. Yes, a prison is a dreadful place; and then, being ever after called a gaol-bird by every one as knows a man was there! But, lud, ma'am, how mighty pale you look! Mayhap you'd like to take a little somewhat?"

"No, thank you, I shall be better by-and-by," was the answer, uttered in so tremulous a tone, that Sally felt convinced there were tears in the eyes of the speaker.

"I've just been to Mrs. Stratford," said Mrs. Hannah, when she perceived Sally. "I dare say you wanted to have the first story, but she is so proud and distant-like, that I determined, the moment I heard that her husband was

marched off to gaol, to give her the news, just to show her that, for all her airs and conceit, we servants are above her and her husband, in not being taken off to prison. Would you believe it, Sally? she never asked a question; only trembled like an aspen leaf, turned as pale as death, and I thought was going to faint. But not a bit of it. She seemed, after a great struggle, to recover herself in a minute or two, and looked so anxious to be left alone, that, seeing nothing was to be got out of her, I came away."

"Oh, Mrs. Hannah! how could you have the heart to tell it to her, all of a sudden, without taking time to break it to her by degrees?"

"Stuff, nonsense; the sooner people know things that concern them, the better; and as she has always been so high and mighty-like with me, whenever I wished to have a bit of chat with her, I was not sorry to have an opportunity of paying her off."

Always respectful towards my mother, never did Sally feel so profound a deference towards her as at present. Uneducated as she was, there was a natural goodness and delicacy

in her mind, that well supplied the place of culture and acquired refinement, and made her so conscious of the sacredness of grief, that she was under the influence of considerable emotion when, after allowing some time to elapse after Hannah had disappeared, she timidly knocked at the door of my mother's chamber.

"I beg pardon, ma'am, but I thought I might be useful. Will you please to let me nurse the dear baby a bit?"

The tears, restrained in the presence of Hannah, had plenteously flowed after her departure, and my mother's pale face was covered with them. She silently placed me in Sally's arms, and turned away to conceal that she was weeping.

"I hope you'll pardon me, ma'am, but, indeed, you must try and not take on so. Things may not be so bad as you fear. Mr. Stratford is *not* gone to prison yet, and I trust in God won't be sent there. He has only been taken to the sheriff's officer's house, until matters are settled."

"Are you sure of this, my good Sally?"

"Quite sure, ma'am, and Thomas has gone there in order to make himself useful by taking

any letters that Mr. Stratford might wish to send."

"How kind and thoughtful," observed Mrs. Stratford.

"And no more than Mr. Stratford deserves from every one," said Sally, "for he's all goodness and kindness himself."

This simple, but well merited commendation, touched the heart of the fond wife, and again brought the tears to her eyes; but she pressed the hand of Sally, and thanked her with a glance more eloquent than words.

"You'll see, ma'am, we'll soon have him back here, please God; for as soon as ever my lord hears of what has happened, he'll get him out."

This hope was, however, much less strong in the breast of my mother than in that of Sally; for she had seen enough of Lord Willamere's recklessness with regard to money matters, to dread that his finances might not be in a state to enable him to liberate her husband.

Sally danced me in her arms, addressed the most endearing epithets to me, and succeeded in bringing smiles to my poor little face.

“ See, ma’am,” said the kind-hearted girl, “ how little missy laughs and coos. Isn’t she a sweet little darling? and so good ! It’s quite a pleasure to nurse her, and I wish you’d let me have the care of her oftener. I dote on pretty children, and never am so happy as when nursing ’em ; and this sweet baby is so good, that it’s quite a treat to be allowed to have her.”

When was a mother’s breast insensible to a compliment addressed to her first-born? Even in the midst of her affliction, mine felt a pleasure in Sally’s well-timed praises of hers, and the good girl was rewarded for her efforts to please, by seeing that they were not wholly unsuccessful.

“ If you could, without neglecting your duty, take charge of my child,” said my mother, “ I would go to the place where my husband is.”

“ Pray don’t think of it, ma’am, ’twould only vex and grieve Mr. Stratford to see you in such a place. Thomas will soon be back, and bring you a letter, you may be sure ; for, only think, ma’am, if Mr. Stratford did not write a note to you before he was taken off, or send to see you,

it could only be because he did not wish you to appear before the sheriff's officer, or to tell you of his trouble until it was over. And you wouldn't have known anything of it, ma'am, only for Hannah's being so busy and meddling as to come and tell you. I wish she had let it alone, and so spared you a couple or three hours' uneasiness. But some people have so little feeling, that they don't know how to behave to those that have."

Hour after hour passed, each fraught with indescribable anxiety and dismay to the distressed wife, before Thomas made his appearance; and the intelligence he brought was but little calculated to remove her fears. He had taken notes from the secretary to Lord Willamere to the House of Lords, and also to his lordship's solicitor, Mr. Spellerman; but as neither had attended to the summons they contained, Mr. Stratford would, he feared, after a fruitless delay of some four or five hours, be removed to prison.

"I know Mr. Spellerman *was* at home," said Thomas, as he related the particulars of his

errand to Sally; "his servant told me he had a party to dinner, and could not be disturbed, so had desired to be denied to every one. I assure you, my dear Sally, it grieved me to the heart, ay, and angered me too, when I saw the rooms all lighted up at his house, and smelt the rich dainties preparing in the kitchen, and saw the various wines, and fine plate on the side-board, while poor Mr. Stratford, who worked early and late for the benefit of my lord, and who has, as you and I know, hardly enough to keep body and soul together, was taken from his wife, and was left fretting through the long hours, in a dark, dingy, lock-up house, with no friend to comfort him, and indebted to a poor servant like myself, for a good office."

"Ah! Thomas, it was enough to pain you. But you know that when Mr. Spellerman asked his friends to dinner, he couldn't know that his presence would be required elsewhere; and he couldn't well leave 'em."

"But, couldn't he give me a line to take to one of his clerks, I should like to know, telling him to go and get poor Mr. Stratford liberated?"

“ So he ought, Thomas ; but I suppose, and more’s the pity, it never entered his head.”

“ Or mayhap, which is more likely, Sally, he had no wish to interpose in the business. ’Twas lucky I had the thought to take in my pocket the three pounds I had ready to put into the Saving Bank, for, just as I expected, poor Mr. Stratford had not a shilling about him. That screw, Bermingham, had his last sovereign out of him this morning ; and in a lock-up house, many a demand is made for money. Oh, Lord ! the imposition I saw going on there is not to be imagined. I forced the poor gentleman to take the three pounds, and a difficult job I had to do so.”

“ God bless you, dear Thomas,” said Sally with moistened eyes, and laying her hand fondly on his ; “ I never loved you so well as at this moment. I, too, have my little earnings in my box, and they shall all go to help Mr. Stratford.”

“ Well, Sally, if you love me better for it, ’twill be some consolation for knowing that what I gave away will keep us some months longer from being married ; and this thought,

I'll own the truth, worried me all the way coming home; yet, believe me, for all that, I'd give it over again, Sally, rather than see the good gentleman in distress."

"Bless you for that, Thomas, bless you!" and Sally vouchsafed a kiss to her sweetheart, a rare and duly appreciated favour; and they separated: she, to deliver a note of which Thomas had been the bearer, from my father to my mother; and Thomas, to excuse his long absence to the *Maître d'Hôtel*, no easy matter, for that person, although by no means over attentive to his own duties, was little disposed to overlook the slightest negligence on the parts of others with regard to theirs. When Sally had ascended the back stairs to go to my mother, she heard the footsteps of her master mounting the front staircase on the same errand. She, therefore, retired to her own room, to wait until he had withdrawn from my mother's, and left her door ajar that she might hear him depart. He had been almost half an hour in the room, when Sally heard my mother's voice, in a more elevated tone

than she had ever previously known that lady to use it, command him to withdraw. "Unhand me instantly, unhand me! my lord," exclaimed my mother; "you insult me, and degrade yourself."

Sally trembled, but, nevertheless, approached the door to be ready to come to my mother's aid if required.

"Pardon me, loveliest, most beloved of women. On my knees I implore you to forgive a moment of madness, caused by the intoxicating effect of your resistless charms. I have long and passionately loved you. In vain have I struggled to subdue my unhappy passion, and to chase your beauteous image from my breast."

"Rise, my lord; every word you utter is an insult; and, oh! merciful powers! what a moment have you chosen to wound, to outrage me!" And here a burst of tears checked my mother's utterance.

"Only hear me. Promise that you will pardon my rash attempt to compel you to listen to my vows of eternal affection; promise that you

will not shun my sight, and I will submit to be your slave, to have no will but yours, no object in life but to please you and study your wishes. My life, my fortune, all—I lay at your feet. Stratford shall be instantly released, and I will procure for him a lucrative appointment, if you will promise to be less cruel, less scornful.”

“Never, never!” exclaimed my mother,—“sooner would I submit to the worst ills that Poverty can inflict, than owe to him, who would dishonour the man who has faithfully served and implicitly trusted him, a single favour. Leave the room, my lord, or permit me to do so.”

“Only say that you will not leave the house, that you will not betray my folly, my madness, and I will leave you. Nay, more; I swear I will never again enter your presence without your permission.”

“Every moment that sees you here, adds to the insult you have already offered to me. I will enter into no terms, make no promises, and I insist on being left alone.”

“ You shall be obeyed, loveliest, but haughtiest of your sex. Such is your power over me, that I yield obedience to your commands even when you bid me leave you, the most difficult of all ;” and Lord Willamere, bowing lowly, quitted the room, leaving my mother overpowered by feelings of insulted virtue and indignation.

A short note from Lord Willamere, expressing his regret that he could not procure money to liberate him, was the only tidings that reached my poor father at the house of the sheriff’s officer ; and even for this note he was indebted to the indefatigable activity of the good-natured Thomas, who had induced the door-keeper of the House of Lords to take the one confided to him by my father to his lord,—the former note had not reached Lord Willamere.

From Mr. Spellerman, not even a note could be obtained, that gentleman persisting in refusing to acknowledge his being in town, although his servant had admitted the fact. The sheriff’s officer, well experienced in similar cases, was not slow in discovering that his prisoner was not likely to prove a profitable one.

His inability, whether real or pretended, to pay the fare for the carriage that conveyed them to Serle-street, impressed him with a conviction of this truth; and he lost as little time as possible in communicating it to his *fidus Achates*, the master of the house, whose interests it materially concerned.

“There’s not much to be made of this ’ere chap, I can tell you,” said Mr. Moses.

“Sorry to hear it,” replied Mr. Isaacs; “he’s either as close-fisted a feller as ever I comed across, or else he’s a pauper; and in either case, he’ll bring no grist to your mill, I’m a thinking. Some of these ’ere chaps keep such a fast hold on their money, that there’s no lugging a shilling out of ’em, and, mayhap, this one is of that sort.”

“I don’t much think it,” said Mr. Moses, shaking his head, “for he’s comed out of a house where there’s a terrible scarcity of money. Why, that there Lord Willamere never pays no one, until he’s forced; his name’s as well known for that, as Rothschild’s is for the contrary.”

“Yes, that’s true enough; but don’t you know that, often when a master is hard up, those as have the management of his money matters, are well to do in the world, and make their fortunes by him?”

“No doubt, it’s often the case, but, somehow or other, I don’t think it is so with this ’ere feller.”

“Well, time will tell, but I have my doubts that he’s not so poor as he pretends, and I’ll tell you my reasons. Mr. Solomons, as cute a chap as I knows anywhere, told me, that of all the customers he ever had, this one was the hardest about beating down interest and trying to get money on easy terms. It was this very beating down of interest as made Solomons discount the bills; for, says he to himself, ‘If they didn’t mean to pay, and didn’t know they would have the wherewithal, they’d never be so sharp about beating down the interest; for, those as knows they *can’t* pay, makes no bother about what they promises to pay. And,’ says Solomons to himself, ‘This Mr. Stratford must have money, for he seems to understand the value of

it so well, which I've remarked, those as have the most of it always do. Would Mr. Stratford take such pains and trouble to beat me down about the interest, if it was only for his employer's sake? No, no, he has a personal motive in it, I'm sure, and as Lord Willamere is such an extravagant and thoughtless man, this 'ere chap must have had plenty of hopportunities of making money."

"Somehow or other, I think this chap too great a spooney to have profited by such chances. Why, lord love you, Mr. Isaacs, there's some men such perfect fools, that they're not up to anything. This man turned so white in the face, and his lips trembled so when I nabbed him, that I made certain he had not the where-withal to get his release, nor no great hopes of having any friend to come forward."

Soon after this conversation between Messrs. Moses and Isaacs, Thomas made his appearance, and, with much difficulty, induced my poor father to accept the loan of three pounds, after which, he took the notes, as previously stated, to his lord, and to Mr. Spellerman.

Anxious to ascertain the precise state of the prisoner's finances, Mr. Isaacs entered the room, and inquired, with some show of urbanity, whether he would not be pleased to take some refreshment.

"Nothing thank you," was the reply.

"You can have anything you like here, sir, from turtle soup down to mutton broth, and from any French *entrée* you choose to ask for, down to a plain mutton chop or beefsteak."

"I require nothing at present," said my father.

"It's growing dusk, so I suppose you'd like candles?"

"Yes," was the reply, and forthwith a pair of wax lights were placed on the table. My father, with the rigid system of economy he was in the habit of practising, immediately extinguished one of the candles, which produced a contemptuous smile from Mr. Isaacs, as he mentally promised, that his prisoner should pay, ay and at triple cost too, for both of them.

"I wonder," said he to himself, "how he thinks

we as keep houses for the accommodation of such as him, are to live?"

"Have you any friend you'd like to send for, sir?" inquired he.

"I have already sent to two;" was the answer.

"And who took the messages or notes?"

"Lord Willamere's servant who came here."

"Then, sir, I must tell you, that it's against the regulations of this house, that any one but my people, or Mr. Moses's, should go of errands for prisoners. I keep men purposely for it, which I must pay, and how am I to be able to do so, if I'm defrauded out of my regular profits?"

My father's face became flushed with indignation, when he heard the term defrauded, addressed to himself. He, however, so far mastered his feelings as to say, that he was ignorant that he was transgressing the rules of the house, when he employed Lord Willamere's servant.

"You'll have to pay just the same, sir, that's all, for as my men were in attendance, and

ready to go on your errands, their time must be paid for."

"Very well," answered my father; and he was once more left to his solitude.

## CHAPTER VII.

How tediously did the time pass on with my father, in this wretched chamber!—his mind a prey to anxiety, as he dwelt with bitterness on the state of his poor wife, should he, as he now began to fear would be the case, be compelled to leave this place of temporary confinement for a prison. Oh! why had he involved her fate in his more wretched one? And their poor child too! Often did he press his icy hands to his burning temples, to cool the fever raging there, and endeavour to think upon some resource, or some well-disposed acquaintance who might be induced to extricate him. He passed over in review all the persons he knew in London, but, alas! as they were chiefly, if not entirely composed of the tradespeople of Lord Willamere, to whom large sums were long due,

the retrospection brought him little comfort. One, however, among the number, he recollected had always manifested more patience and civility than the others. This was the grocer, Mr. Manvers, whose character for integrity he had ever found justified by the correctness of his accounts and moderation of his charges. He would send for Mr. Manvers, relate his position to him, and perhaps he might be induced to come to his aid in this dilemma. But, then, Pride interposed, to check the latent hope suggested by this expedient. How was he to solicit so great a favour from one on whose kindness he had no claim? How reveal to him, a comparative stranger, the affairs of Lord Willamere, the entanglement of which had led to the bill transactions, and finally to his own imprisonment? Was he, who had borne poverty, and all the privations it entails, uncomplainingly, to now become a suitor to a person of whom he knew little, and who knew even less of him? Oh! there was pain and humiliation in the very thought, and he abandoned it almost as soon as it had been formed. But then again

came the recollection of his Emily and their child. What was to become of *them*, when he should be the inmate of a prison? Was he not selfish, in giving way to the dictates of his own pride, when his adored wife's peace of mind was in question? Yes, he would vanquish his scruples, stifle the sense of delicacy that made him shrink from soliciting the aid of Mr. Manvers, and at once write to him to request his presence.

"To what vexation, what humiliation would I not submit, to be enabled to return home to my poor Emily, before she learns the cause of my long and unusual absence!" exclaimed my father.

He wrote to Mr. Manvers, and Mr. Isaacs, having despatched the note, again proffered refreshments to his prisoner.

"You'll surely not refuse to order a bottle of wine, sir?" said that individual, on profitable, not hospitable thoughts intent.

"I prefer a little tea," was the answer: and Mr. Isaacs withdrew, evidently ill-pleased at the result of his offer.

After a few minutes had elapsed, Mr. Moses made his appearance.

“As you seem unacquainted with the rules of houses like this, sir, I must just tell you, that it’s the custom for all gentlemen as stop here to call for something, even if they don’t want it, for the good of the house. That’s how people like Mr. Isaacs live, and are able to pay rent and taxes ; and if it suits gentlemen’s convenience to remain here a few hours, just to see what their friends will do for ’em, or to try if *indeed* they *have any* friends, for this is the place to find that out, they ought to remember to behave genteelly, and do what’s expected of ’em.”

“I did not know the regulations,” answered my father, with a deep sigh, “and as I felt unequal to touching any refreshments, I did not think it necessary to order any.”

“Very likely, sir, but you need not take any if you don’t like it. This is Liberty Hall in that respect, for all it’s a lock-up house, but every one as comes here must order something for the good of the house. In like manner *I* must be paid for allowing you to stay here, when I could have taken you off straight to prison at once. I just mention these things because I see

you are not used to our business. But you'll become so in the course of time, I dare say, and then you'll want no one to instruct you."

"I have ordered some tea," observed Mr. Stratford.

"Lord love you, sir! that goes for nothing. Order a couple of bottles of wine. Mr. Isaacs and I will empty one to your health, and the other will go to Mrs. Isaacs's cupboard. 'Live and let live,' that's my motto; and I don't think any one can object to it."

Before the poor secretary could assent or dissent to the proverb, uttered with much self-complacency by Mr. Moses, the messenger returned from Mr. Manvers, saying that an answer would be sent. My father's faint hope of assistance from that quarter instantly faded, and it was not until it had vanished, that he became sensible, by the pang of disappointment, that he had counted on it. "Ay, ay, I see how it is," said Mr. Moses, the old story! Won't come. 'An answer will be sent,' means precisely, that no more notice will be taken of the request. It's astonishing how tender-hearted

people's friends become, when they hear men are shut up in a prison. They can't bear to see a friend in distress, I suppose, so never come near 'em. It's a pity, sir, you went to the expense of sending a messenger for nothing. A pretty sum 'twill come to, too; for Jem must have half killed the cab-horse, to have got there and back in so short a time!"

"I'll trouble you for the fare of the cab, and the payment of my messenger," said Mr. Isaacs, entering the room: "Short reckonings make long friends, as the saying is, and it's the rule of my house to have everything paid for when had."

"How much is the amount?" asked my father, putting his hand into his pocket.

"Seven shillings and sixpence for the cab, and five shillings for the messenger."

"And as your hand is in, sir, 'twill be just as well to pay me for the fly that we came in here. It's but a trifle—seven and sixpence; so a sovereign will clear both the little accounts," observed Mr. Moses.

The sovereign was abstracted from the pocket of Mr. Stratford, and handed over to the claim-

ants, who left the room to divide it between them.

“I say, Moses, did you see, we got him to fork out at last,” said Mr. Isaacs, “for all you thought he had no money.”

“He’s no better than he should be, you may be sure,” was the reply; “for he positively pretended to have no cash, when I asked him for some to pay the cab when we arrived. A regular screw, and deserves to be worked. I can’t abide such fellows—wanting to do us out of our profits. They ought to be ashamed of themselves, but they have no shame in ’em.”

“It’s no use letting him remain here, you may take my word for it; the house will gain nothing by such a skin-flint, and no one will come to release him. You see the man he sent for wouldn’t come, nor the lawyer that the servant went for.”

“I’m quite of your opinion, and will march him off, but let us first get a couple of bottles of wine out of him. I told him ’twas the custom here, so he’s prepared for it.”

“If I thought he had another sovereign or

two left, I'd send up the wine, but I didn't hear the jingle of any more coin in his pocket when he drew out the one we've got."

"Let us take our chance. I'm rather thirsty, and two or three glasses of wine will do me good; and it's my opinion that there's a few more sovereigns where this one came from."

"Very well, I'll send up the wine, so that he can't say that it was not served to him."

"No, no, it's all fair and above board here, Mr. Isaacs."

Contrary to the expectations of Messrs. Isaacs and Moses, and indeed of my father, himself, Mr. Manvers, the grocer, in due time made his appearance at Serle Street. He was a grave man, and on this occasion looked even more so than usual. He listened with an unchanged aspect to the statement of the secretary. He, however, shook his head when the bill transactions were explained, and opened his eyes in astonishment when informed that no portion of the money raised had ever entered the purse of Stratford.

"Lord Willamere will not, surely, leave you

here to suffer for his debts?" demanded Mr. Manvers.

"His lordship would not, I am convinced, had he the means, this moment, of releasing me."

"But ought he, can he, as an honest man, let you be imprisoned on his account,—if he has plate, horses, carriages, furniture, any of those things which even persons much beneath his lordship in station are not without?"

My father was silent, for he did not think himself justified in disclosing to any one the fact, that all the personal and household property of Lord Willamere had long been assigned over to a friendly creditor, in order to preserve them from those less amicably disposed. Careless and culpably negligent as Lord Willamere had been towards him, my father possessed so good a heart, and was so guileless, and unskilled in worldly lore, that he judged the blamable conduct of Lord Willamere much more leniently than it deserved, and shrank from revealing aught that could militate against either his character or his pecuniary interests. While he paused, embarrassed what reply to

make, Mr. Manvers looked still more gravely than before, and his countenance assumed an expression of austerity, that left little hope in the mind of the poor secretary that he had anything to expect from him.

“You have not answered my question, Mr. Stratford, and your silence, I confess, appears incomprehensible to me. If Lord Willamere suffers you to be imprisoned for his debts, he being, as a peer, protected from arrest, then I must pronounce his conduct anything but what might be expected from a nobleman or gentleman, and your forbearance towards him surprises me. I have another question to ask you, Mr. Stratford. Do you think the house of Lord Willamere, a professed libertine, as his lordship is accused of being, a proper abode for your young and handsome wife, when you can no longer be there to protect her?”

“I have no friends, no means to provide her a home, however humble,” said my father; his lips tremulous with emotion. “If I had, never should she have entered that house.”

“Perhaps it would have been better for both

your sakes that she never had," observed Mr. Manvers gravely.

My father looked at him inquiringly, and then said, "Why, why would it have been better? I know that it would have been infinitely better for her, that we had not married: it needs no one to remind me of that; for one of the heaviest reproaches I have to make myself, was the having urged her to leave a home where she was esteemed, respected, and knew no privations, to share my lot, the hardships of which I ought to have too well known to have exposed her to them."

"I did not mean to reproach you with your marriage, although it must be admitted it was an imprudent one, situated as you were."

"Why then did you say it would have been as well that my wife had never entered Lord Willamere's house?"

"I hardly know, Mr. Stratford, whether I am justified in entering on so very delicate a subject; yet, as I made the reflection you have repeated, perhaps I ought to state the reason. You are not probably aware of the evil rumours

circulated against your honour, and the purity of your wife, in consequence of her having taken up her abode beneath the roof of Lord Willamere?"

"Merciful God, is it so?" exclaimed my father, turning pale as death. "Oh, my poor Emily! my poor Emily!" and he sank into a chair. His agony, too deep to leave a doubt, even on the most suspicious mind, that it was feigned, secretly touched the feelings of Mr. Manvers, an upright, honourable man, who could sympathize with the pain he had unconsciously inflicted.

"Was it not enough to entail poverty on her, but must I also have exposed her fair fame, dearer to me than life itself, to calumny? Oh! Mr. Manvers, if you knew her, you would, like me, be convinced of her purity, of her irreproachable conduct! And is this then the reward of a conjugal devotion, seldom equalled, never exceeded,—of a resignation under privation rarely borne with such fortitude even by man? Oh, this is the most bitter of all my trials, the one which most unmans me."

And my poor father gave way to the emotion,

he could no longer control; all the griefs pent up in his heart for long months, seemed now to overflow the boundaries in which they had hitherto been confined, and his agitated frame shook in the vain struggle to subdue them.

“How has this man been wronged!” thought Mr. Manvers; “I wish I had not revealed to him the evil rumours that had reached me.”

“I feel hardly less indignant at the injury offered to Lord Willamere, by those base and unfounded slanders, than at that aimed at my wife, and my own character,” said my father. “He is incapable of harbouring even a dishonourable thought towards me or mine, and would, I am sure, be the first to resent such a charge. But tell me, I entreat you, Mr. Manvers, what you really did hear? To refute slander, one should be made aware of its extent; and though it will be indeed a most painful thing for me to listen to reports so humiliating, so wounding to my feelings; nevertheless, I must request you to be explicit with me.”

And, although pale as marble, my father, by

a violent effort of self-control, assumed a more calm and composed aspect.

“I wish you would not call on me to inflict this pain on you, and on myself also,” replied Mr. Manvers; “for I assure you, I am now so fully convinced of the utter falsehood of the rumours I had heard, that it will be very painful for me to repeat them. Spare me the disagreeable task, and as an amend for the chagrin I have already caused you, and at a moment, too, when you had so much cause for annoyance on other grounds, allow me to tell you, that if I can be of use to you in your present dilemma, it will really give me satisfaction to do so.”

“Thanks, thanks! I feel your kindness as I ought, but you must let me know the worst.”

“Well then—but really I hardly can bring myself to utter what must inflict pain, knowing, as I now do, the utter falsehood of the reports.”

“Pray let me hear them at once.”

“You were represented as one of those convenient husbands who submit to their own

dishonour. Men who, instead of being the guardians of the purity of their wives, expose them to temptation, and profit by the result."

My father groaned aloud and shuddered, and Mr. Manvers again begged to be excused entering into further particulars.

"Proceed, I pray you to proceed," exclaimed the agitated man.

"A lucrative place was, it has been stated, to be the reward of your in——." Infamy, he would have said, but he checked himself at the first syllable.

"Oh God! Oh God!" muttered my father.

"These evil rumours were chiefly circulated by servants, who had heard them from their masters, some of whom had seen you and your wife at the table of Lord Willamere, and marked the more than ordinary interest his lordship appeared to take in the lady. Her beauty, and residence in Lord Willamere's house, added to his well-known libertinism, offered sufficient grounds for slander; and when the reports in question proceeded from his lordship's friends and companions, you can

hardly wonder that they received credence. If gentlemen knew the injury they inflict by their unrestrained conversations and comments in the presence of servants waiting on them at table, they would be less apt to indulge in them. All the rumours that float about London, and find their way at last into the slanderous newspapers, may be traced to this source. A few coarse jokes, or the bantering too often carried on between libertines, have frequently led to the loss of reputation of women, whose only faults were a levity originating in high spirits, and indulged in, through want of knowledge of the world."

"And this terrible slander obtained belief?"

"I regret to say it did. Few persons take the trouble of inquiring into the truth or falsehood of evil reports. It is enough that a semblance of probability exists, to gain them general credence, and the slandered are often the last to hear of them."

- My father felt as if the brand of dishonour had fixed an indelible mark on his brow. At one moment, the burning blood of shame

mounted to his very temples, and the next, a cold shudder passed over his frame.

The presence of Mr. Moses interrupted further conversation; and was explained by that person informing the prisoner, that he could no longer remain in Serle Street—"I have let you stay here longer than I ought," said Mr. Moses; "but now we must be off."

At this moment the voice of Mr. Isaacs was heard in tones of loud expostulation on the stairs. "It's no use, Ma'am, going up to disturb the prisoner now, for he's just going to be taken off to gaol."

"*I will, I must* see him," said a voice, which even though half-choked by emotion, still retained an unusual sweetness.—"Good God! it is my wife," exclaimed my father, rushing to the door to meet her, forgetful for the moment that it was locked, and her tremulous tones of entreaties still reaching his ear.—"I will ring, sir," said Mr. Manvers; and pulling the bell-rope repeatedly, Mr. Isaacs made his appearance. "Be so good as to allow Mrs. Stratford to come up to her husband:—or stay, I will go

and conduct her myself." And so saying, Mr. Manvers left the room and went to her.

"I didn't know, sir, whether you might wish to see the lady or not."

"Not wish to see my wife?" exclaimed my father, greatly agitated.

"Why, for the matter of that, sir, I couldn't be sure that she was your wife." Here my father looked so fiercely at him, that he changed his tone. "I beg pardon, sir," resumed he; "what I meant was, that so many ladies come here after gentlemen when they are arrested, and always say they are their wives, that I sometimes don't know what to think; and often the gentlemen would rather *not* see 'em, and scold me for letting 'em in, they cry, and take on so."

He had hardly finished this speech, when the agitated, tearful wife entered, and was pressed in the arms of her husband. The meeting was a very touching one; and Mr. Manvers, having made a sign to Mr. Isaacs to withdraw, was on the point of following him, when my father requested him to remain. "I almost wish you

had not come here, my poor Emily," said he; "this is no place for you."

"My place is near you, wherever you may be, dearest," replied his wife, clinging with trembling eagerness to his arm, as if to seek protection—"you must bear up against this trial, my beloved."

"With you I can bear any trial, but do not let us again be separated. Let me share your prison, it will be happiness, compared with the wretchedness of being parted from you. I have brought our child, and a few things for present use. She is below with Sally, who accompanied me here. I left Willamere House, never more to enter it. Oh! William, you know not, you cannot know, what I have suffered since you left me;" and here a passionate burst of tears impeded my mother's utterance.

"Speak, dearest Emily! say what has occurred. I implore you to tell me."

My mother cast a timid glance at Mr. Manvers, as if to indicate to her husband, that what she had to communicate was not fit for a stranger's ear; but he, understanding that

appealing look, told her that Mr. Manvers was his friend, his only one in the present hour of trial, and begged her to have no reserve on account of his presence.

“Oh! William, how have you been deceived by the selfish unfeeling man, in whom you have trusted! Could you have imagined that Lord Willamere, emboldened by your absence, and forgetful of all decency or pity for my distress, dared to insult me by an avowal of his passion!”

My father started from his seat as if an adder had stung him; his very brow became crimsoned with indignation and shame, and he shook with emotion. “The villain, the villain!” exclaimed he, “and it is for this man;—but no, I will not profane the name of man by so calling him;—it is for this vile, this heartless wretch, that I am now a prisoner; that I have for months and years suffered privations and humiliations without end, while unceasingly toiling in his service, too conscious of his pecuniary embarrassments to remind him of my own. Oh! Emily, can you forgive me for having

exposed you to such insult?" And here my poor father's utterance was checked by the violence of his feelings.

His wife forgot her own grief in pity for his, and soothed him with a tenderness that melted the heart of Manvers, who now, perfectly convinced of the utter falsehood of the tales circulated against this poor but excellent couple, determined to assist them to the utmost of his power. He arranged with Messrs. Isaacs and Moses, that their prisoner should remain where he was for the night, that accommodation should be found for his wife and child; and having seen a repast which he had ordered served to them, he bade them farewell for the night, promising to be with them early next morning.

## CHAPTER VIII.

TRUE love! the most unselfish of all the passions,—thou that canst make thy votaries forget self in anxiety for another, and that canst only lead them to unhappiness through the object beloved—Oh, what like thee can refine and purify the heart!

Each occupied only by thought for the other, my father and mother endeavoured to assume the appearance of a calmness that was, alas! foreign to the minds of both. What the morrow might bring, neither dared to reflect on. A prison, in all its dreariness, arose in the gloomy vista which their imaginations pictured; and a dread of separation, the last—worst ill of all that menaced them, haunted their thoughts. Yet, notwithstanding these dismal forebodings, each tried to cheat the other by the semblance of

composure, while their hearts were a prey to anxiety and depression. The baseness of one whom he had regarded and confided in, overpowered the firmness of my father. In whom henceforth was he to trust, when Lord Willamere, whom he had so faithfully, so devotedly served, had betrayed and wounded him in the most tender point? When he looked on the pale but beautiful face of his wife, on which care had already left its traces, but where purity and innocence had set their seal, he wondered, that even the most reckless libertine should have dared to entertain for such a being aught approaching to an unholy feeling. Was she, in her calm and almost angelic beauty, a fit object for the sensual desires and grovelling appetites of a libertine? O! no. It was sacrilege so to regard her, and accursed be he who had presumed to insult her chaste ears with vows of lawless passion, or to view her in any other light than that of a model for wives and mothers. And this was the woman with whose fair fame the tongues of sinful men had been busy. There was torture, there was madness

in the thought ; and as he looked on that mild and lovely face, beaming with tenderness on her slumbering infant, and turning from it to him with glances full of pitying affection, he felt that debased and corrupted indeed must those be, who could, after having once seen her, harbour, even for a moment, a single suspicion to her disadvantage,

Poor man, ignorant of the world, and of the vice of those who form a considerable portion of its denizens, he was prone to judge others by himself. As soon could he have suspected the chastity of an angel as that of the lovely creature before him ; and he could have wept in very tenderness, as a fond mother would over an innocent and wronged daughter, as he remembered that his Emily had been traduced and insulted. But not always were his feelings so calm. At moments, an unconquerable rage would fill his mind ; and had the vile libertine, who had dared to breathe his passionate vows to his wife's ear, or the base aspersers of her fame and his honour, stood before him, he would have perilled his life to avenge the

wrong. Never previously had his breast been shook by such a whirlwind of contending passions. Anger, love, and pity strove by turns for mastery; but jealousy, “the green-eyed monster,” that tortures less pure breasts, found no entrance in his honest and confiding one. He knew that his honour was as safe in the keeping of his Emily as in his own; and that the mind of his slumbering child was not more free from earthly stain or sin than was hers. Never, if he could guard against it, should her ear be shocked by hearing that her virtue had been questioned—that she had been regarded as the paramour of Lord Willamere! He felt that he would prefer death to her learning this terrible tale, for he wished that her pure mind should never be sullied by a knowledge that such wickedness could be, and, above all, be directed to her. And he too, how had his character,—that by which he lived, by which he hoped to gain an honourable maintenance for his wife and child—been assailed! O God! that *he* should have lived to be pointed at by the finger of scorn, as that vilest of all wretches

that shame manhood, a husband conniving at his own dishonour !

While these torturing reflections passed through his mind, his wife marked their effect on his changeful countenance, and, approaching him, gently pressed her fair and delicate hand on his fevered brow.

“Do not give way to painful thoughts, dearest,” said she, in the low and sweet accents that ever soothed and charmed his ear. “A prison is not always, I am prone to hope, so cheerless an abode as it is represented. Heaven be praised, I have a right to be with you, even there, and never did I bless this privilege more than now. I can make pretty drawings, and various ingenious little things, which, through the medium of Mr. Manvers, who seems so kindly disposed towards us, may find a sale. We have been accustomed to privations, and, God be thanked ! have learned to bear them, and I trust that by our joint exertions we can earn sufficient to supply our wants.”

“Bless you, my sweet Emily ! always my soother and comforter under every trial,” replied

the fond husband, as he removed the hand from his temples and pressed it to his lips. "Yes, even a prison cheered by your presence will be to me preferable, oh! how far preferable, than a palace would be without, could I but forget that it was my selfishness that has led you there."

"How you torment yourself, dearest! You ought long ere this to have known how warmly my heart pleaded your suit for our marriage, and that ought like regret for that which I must ever consider the happiest event of my whole life, sounds like a reproach to me for having encumbered you with a wife and child."

"Blessed, blessed ties, that bind me to an existence that without them would be, indeed, a dreary, an insupportable one! Yes, even here, with so much to render me anxious for the present, and to alarm me for the future, I feel that I have a great deal to be thankful for, and that, while Heaven spares me you and our child, I ought not to despair."

In such communing, this poor, but loving pair passed the early part of the night, until slumber,

that greatest of all blessings to the wretched, pressed their eyelids, and for a few hours granted an oblivion of their cares.

When my father opened his eyes next morning, for a moment he felt as if in a dream; but the sight of the iron-barred windows, and the unclean room with its gaudy but faded finery, brought the reality to his mind. His wife and child still slept, and as the light from the shutterless window fell on their faces the calm beauty of both touched him almost to tears. The child smiled in its slumber—poor innocent! unconscious that even already care and poverty had laid their chilling grasp on its young life, and that, from its gentle sleep, it was to open its eyes in a prison; and the fair young mother in her slumber sighed forth the name of her husband, and pressed the pillow on which her head reclined, to her cheek, believing it to be his hand. Oh, Sleep! how calm, how holy art thou! How like thy sister, Death! Surely, if ever it be permitted to mortals to hold communion with heavenly spirits, it must be when resigned to thy benign influence. They are then more freed

from worldly thoughts and sinful passions, and their very helplessness, like that of infants, places them more immediately under the protection of their Father in heaven. My father's troubled spirit became calm as he contemplated the two beloved beings in repose. They comprised his world, his only treasure. Were they no longer in existence, life would no more have a single charm, a single blessing for him. There lay his all—the only comfort, the sole drops of sweetness vouchsafed to his cup of bitterness; and yet, how were his cares for the present, and his dread for the future, rendered sharper by his anxiety for their well-being! He feared lest every noise might break their slumbers, now so sweet and calm, and that his poor Emily should awake sooner than he could wish, to behold the iron bars of their prison, and be reminded of the painful realities of their actual position.

“How many,” thought my father, as he gazed, with almost woman's tenderness, on his wife and child, “less worthy, oh! how infinitely less worthy than my poor Emily, are at this moment pillowed on down, and surrounded by all the

appliances of wealth and splendour, who will awake to enjoy luxuries, and to frame new and imaginary wants, certain of the means of procuring them, while this fair, this pure creature will awake to feel 'the stings and arrows' of our hard fortune, denied even a modest competency wherewith to minister to our humble desires! Oh, Fortune! well hast thou been accounted blind, when thou canst heap thy golden stores on the less worthy, and leave a being like this to pine in want. But let me not murmur. Thy ways, Almighty, are inscrutable, and, as Thou hast deemed it fit to steep me and mine in poverty, teach me to bear it with resignation. Teach me to remember, whenever misfortune presses most heavily upon me, that hundreds, nay, thousands, more worthy than I am, are exposed to similar, perhaps to greater trials, and to bow with submission to Thy will."

Those who have fought with fortune, and vainly resisted her strokes, will acknowledge that the angry spirit in which they have been received, greatly adds to the irritation of the wounds inflicted. But no sooner does resigna-

tion take the place of anger, than a mental relief is experienced; although the wounds are deep as before, they rankle less; and submission brings, in time, healing on its wings. My mother at length awoke, but her first glance was not, as her husband feared it would be, at the iron-barred window, but at him; and, oh! what unutterable love was in that look. The next glance was at her sleeping child, and then her eyes were lifted towards Heaven, in thanks for the possession of these blessings. How angelic did she appear, as with rapt devotion her lips moved in prayer, and, when ended, she pressed them to her husband's brow!

Mr. Manvers was announced before my father and mother had completed their matinal meal. His manner towards them was even more cordial than on the preceding evening, and he assured the former that he felt the utmost desire to be of use to him.

"To do this, it will be necessary for me to know your exact position, and the extent of the engagements into which you have entered," said the worthy man.

When informed of them,—and the amount was much larger than he had anticipated,—he questioned my father as to the likelihood of Lord Willamere's ever paying those debts which, in truth, were his, and his only. The bare mention of that name brought the flush of indignation to the cheek of the poor secretary, while he answered, that before he had learned the base attempt of his lordship to corrupt his wife, he would have considered a doubt on this subject as an injury and insult to him. “But now,” added my father, “I can believe him capable of anything, and my conviction is, that he will leave me to suffer for my foolish and misplaced confidence in his honour.”

“I hardly know what to advise, or what to do,” observed Mr. Manvers. “Your responsibilities amount to a large,—a very large sum.” But here a glance at the pale cheeks and tearful eyes of my mother, so touched the feelings of the kind-hearted man, that his pity for her almost conquered his prudence. Still, the sum required to free my father from the whole of his liabilities was too serious a one to be lightly

proffered. It was true, Mr. Manvers was a rich man, and had only two children to provide for; but to pay so much money for so worthless a person as Lord Willamere, was really vexatious. Yet, if he did not free my father, the poor man would be sent to prison, and the fair young creature before him, and her child, would have to share his hard lot. What a foolish man Stratford must be to have involved himself in such a labyrinth of difficulties for any one, but more especially for so unworthy a person as Lord Willamere;—and a sentiment of anger against the poor secretary entered his mind.

A thorough man of business, with habits of scrupulous exactitude in fulfilling his engagements, and consequently cautious in forming them, he could not make allowance for the utter want of prudence in my father, as revealed by the statement he had extracted from him, nor for his total ignorance and inexperience in matters of business. There was something of contempt mingled in the pity he entertained for him. But then followed the reflection,—and

there was a certain portion of self-complacency in it, of the general deficiency of learned men in a pecuniary knowledge of affairs, and of their vast inferiority in this respect to men of business like himself. He felt disposed to thank providence that *he* was not a scholar, lest he too might have been as ignorant of money matters as the poor ruined man before him: but this very self-complacency engendered kind sentiments towards my father. "I'll tell you what, sir," said he, "I'll at once pay this bill of Mr. Solomon's, and, as no other detainer has been lodged against you, my doing so will secure your liberty. Let me settle with the harpies here, for be assured you are no match for them."

"I know not how to thank you, indeed I hardly think I ought to accept the service you so very kindly offer to render me, knowing, as I do, that I am not likely to have the means of repaying you."

But the eloquent glance of my mother spoke volumes to the good-natured Mr. Manvers, and he had seldom in his life experienced more self-satisfaction than at that moment, when

assured that he had rendered so charming a woman happy. He left the room, to arrange matters with Messrs. Moses and Isaacs; and my mother threw herself into the arms of her husband, filled with gratitude to Heaven, for having in their hour of need raised up such a friend to serve them. The thinness of the walls and partitions of the ill-built house of Mr. Isaacs, enabled those in the rooms immediately above the ones occupied by the owner, to overhear all that passed in them, and my parents soon heard loud and angry voices in discussion.

“What! twenty shillings for two bottles of sherry?” exclaimed Mr. Manvers; “why, I keep as good wine as any merchant in London, and I never dreamt of charging any such price.”

“That may be, sir,” replied Mr. Isaacs, sulkily. “You charge what you like, and I charge what pleases me. Your customers go to you through choice, and may go elsewhere if it suits them; mine come to me from necessity, can’t help themselves, and so I must charge accordingly.”

“ You don’t mean to say that Mr. Stratford drank two bottles of wine last night, do you?”

“ He might have drunk ’em, if it so pleased him to do, for they were served to him; but as he didn’t that wasn’t my fault, they must be paid for all the same. And what’s more, I don’t see why people should grumble about such trifles. ‘ Live and let live,’ is my motto; and I must say, that I never had a worse customer enter my house than this here friend of yours. Wouldn’t have a bit of dinner served, nor order any thing, which he ought to have done, if only from a sense of common decency and for the good of the house.”

The husband and wife looked at each other, as they listened to this new code of lock-up-house etiquette; and both mentally prayed that they might never again be subjected to its influence.

To those not accustomed to analyze human character and motives, it would have appeared a strange anomaly, to hear Mr. Manvers disputing every item of the gross imposition entered in Mr. Isaacs’ account, while determined,

with but a faint prospect of eventually being reimbursed, to pay the whole of the amount of the writ taken out against my father by the usurer Solomons, with all the legal expenses that had accumulated thereon. But to those acquainted with mankind, there was nothing strange in this mixture of parsimony and generosity, for they know that they continually meet in the same individuals; and that it is owing to a strict observance of prudence and economy, that people are enabled to perform generous actions.

And now all accounts were settled, and the harpies of the lock-up-house paid, the next question was, where were the Stratfords to go? "Have you no friends who would receive you for a few days, until we could see what can be done?" demanded he; but the rapid and melancholy change in the countenances of both husband and wife gave a negative to the question, before their faltering lips could pronounce one; and the kind-hearted, but somewhat *brusque* Manvers sincerely regretted having asked one which, by reminding them of their friendless

position, had evidently occasioned them so much pain. "How very stupid it was of me," resumed he, after a short pause, "to forget that I have a couple of spare rooms at my house, where you will be very comfortable for the present, and where I can assure you of a very hearty welcome."

There was nothing left for my parents, but to accept the kind invitation; and, deeply impressed with a sense of the goodness of him who gave it, they entered the hackney-coach, which had been sent for by Mr. Manvers, and drove to his house. With a delicate regard to the feelings of his new guests, he led them into the house through the private door instead of through the shop, that they might not be exposed to the prying gaze of the shopmen or customers who filled it; and having conducted them up stairs into a neatly furnished sitting-room, with an excellent bed-room and dressing-room adjoining, he told them to consider themselves quite at home, and begged that they would share his repasts, naming the hours at which they were served.

“ On hospitable thoughts intent,” Mr. Manvers went to consult with his housekeeper, who also enacted the part of cook in his large but well-ordered establishment, on the necessity of making some addition to the family dinner. He always dined apart from his clerks, as he partook that meal with his two daughters, girls of ten and eleven years old, on whom he doted. “ A gentleman and his wife, particular friends of mine,” said Mr. Manvers, anxious to impress the precise Mrs. Manley with a respectful consideration for his guests,—“ have done me the favour to come and spend some time with me, and I desire that every attention may be paid to their comfort while they remain.”

“ Certainly, sir,” was the reply.

“ Have a couple of roast chickens added to dinner; and tell Betsey the housemaid to give all the time she can spare from her work to Mrs. Stratford’s child.”

“ Two additional rooms to clean every day, sir, will, I fear, not leave Betsey any time for the child; but I know a nice tidy young girl, sir, a cousin of Betsey’s, who is looking out for

a place, and who would be very glad, for the sake of her meals, to come here and take charge of the child, and wait on the lady too while they stay, and she could sleep with Betsey."

"A capital plan, Mrs. Manley, send for her directly; but mind, Mrs. Stratford is not to know that this young person has been engaged on her account. Let it be supposed that she belongs to the house." And having satisfactorily made these arrangements, Mr. Manvers hurried off to his shop to superintend his business, well pleased with himself and others; while Mrs. Manley, having sent out for the chickens and for Betsey's cousin, donned her best cap, and a snowy-muslin apron, and proceeded to pay her respects to the new visitors.

"I hope, Ma'am, that you won't scruple to ring the bell for anything you want," said the good woman, after having respectfully welcomed my father and mother. "Here, Ma'am, you'll find plenty of nice books;" and she took the key of a large and well-stored bookcase from her pocket, and handed it to my mother. "I'll send you up the morning papers

immediately, sir; and here you'll find paper, pens, and ink," continued she, addressing my father, as she opened a neat mahogany writing-desk, which formed one of the pieces of furniture of the apartment. "Oh, the dear child! bless its little heart, what a pretty creature!" said Mrs. Manley, turning to the baby which its mother had laid on the sofa, and who, refreshed by its long sleep, was now smiling and stretching out its little rounded limbs in apparent comfort.

"We have a handy, active young person in the house, who will be glad, Ma'am, to take charge of little miss and to wait on you, as my master ordered. She'll be here in a few minutes; and, in the meanwhile, I'll just step and make a little panada, for I'm sure, by its yawning, that the little darling is hungry." And off went Mrs. Manley, leaving my parents much pleased with her, and thankful that the kindness of their host would not be thwarted by the ill-will of his confidential servant, as is too often the case in similar circumstances.

Ere half an hour had elapsed, the child had

partaken of its panada, which was excellent, and was cooing and smiling as gaily, as if, to use a common phrase, "it had been born with the silver spoon in its mouth," which had so lately fed it: and its parents, thankful to Providence for their recent release from prison and present shelter, tried to be as happy as they were grateful.

## CHAPTER IX.

GREAT was Lord Willamere's regret and dissatisfaction when he learned that my mother had left his house. Well knowing her poverty and dependent situation, he had not anticipated her taking this step, and, careless as he in general was with regard to the feelings of others, it is only rendering him justice to state, that, could he have recalled the event that had, as he imagined, led to it, gladly would he have done so. He felt, now, that it was too late to atone for the evil. What an error he had committed in alarming the virtue he had so long wished to undermine! How ill-timed was his rash declaration of love, at a moment when the position of her husband must have engrossed all my mother's thoughts, and excited, even more than usual, all her tenderness; and when *he*, with common

tact, ought to have evinced even more than ordinary delicacy and respect in his conduct towards her! Yes; he had grossly committed himself; thrown up the game, as he termed it, when by skilfully playing his cards he might have won it, and, by having given way to the impulse of his mad passion, he had created fear and dislike, where he would have made every sacrifice, save that of his guilty affection, to have excited regard. He blamed the wine he had drank at dinner, for having had so little self-control in his interview with my mother. He cursed his own folly, nay, accused her loveliness, heightened in his eyes by her agitation and tears for her husband, for his own madness in throwing off all disguise, and trying to compel her to listen to his vows. He recalled, with deep emotion, her terrified glance as she shrank from his approach, and the disdain with which she repelled him. Yes, even he, libertine as he was, had been awed by the withering scorn of an insulted and unprotected woman, and, mad as was the passion with which her exquisite beauty had inspired him, he was conscious that his

spirit had quailed beneath her reproving glance, and that he dared not again encounter it. How great must be her contempt of *him*, who in the moment of her heavy trial, the arrest of her husband, when she most needed the solace of sympathy and respect, could violate all the laws of decorum and hospitality, and offer insult to her whom he should have sought to shield from ought approaching it. He struck his temples with his open hand as these thoughts passed through his mind. He accused himself, again and again, of having invaded the sanctity of his own roof, in offending a virtuous woman while beneath it, and almost loathed himself for having, by his mad conduct, driven her to seek shelter elsewhere. And Stratford, too! that worthy, that honest and disinterested man, who had so faithfully served him for years! who had borne, with a delicacy and patience unequalled, the privations which the irregularity and scantiness of the payments made to him must have occasioned!—who was, even now, deprived of his liberty, not for any debt of his own contracting, but for one of the very man who was plotting to injure him

in the tenderest point, and who seized the opportunity afforded him by the incarceration of his poor secretary, to outrage his wife by licentious and open avowals of passion! Lord Willamere, although a libertine and a voluptuary, was not wholly destitute of good feeling; and there were moments in his life when the still small voice of conscience would make itself heard, and cause him to regret, that, in the reckless indulgence of his own evil propensities, he had inflicted injury on others. He had not sufficient firmness or self-control to resist temptation, nor moral principle enough to be aware of the enormity of his misdeeds, or of the extent of the evil entailed on others by his transgressions. He really felt a good-will, and no inconsiderable degree of respect towards his secretary, and would, if occasion offered, have rendered him any service in his power; but, while ready to do this, he would not have scrupled to have used every effort to seduce the wife of his bosom, and would have laughed to scorn any attempt to make him sensible of the dishonour and turpitude of such conduct.

Fully convinced that Stratford would have sooner died than connive at any dereliction from virtue in his wife, and that even a doubt of her purity would render him inconsolable, he, nevertheless, would have heedlessly compromised her reputation, rather than miss an opportunity of being in her company, and would have exposed that of her worthy husband, by letting it be supposed that he tacitly acquiesced in his own dishonour. Now, however, foiled in his schemes, and his intended victim having escaped from his power, he regretted his own rash conduct, and experienced more pain at having aggravated the trials and sufferings of his poor secretary, than any of his *roué* friends would have believed him capable of feeling. A sentiment of shame, as deep as it was unusual with him to know, mingled with his self-reproach; and, had he had hundreds at his command at that moment, there is no doubt his first use of them would have been to have released my father from every debt of his for which he was liable, and to have paid him every shilling of the arrears of salary for which he was indebted to him. Nay, more, he

would, had the opportunity offered at that crisis, have bestowed on him any appointment he could have procured, as some reparation for the injury he had attempted to inflict on him. "Poor fellow!" thought Lord Willamere, "I really do believe he liked me, and liked me for myself alone. He was, indeed, disinterested, and devoted to my interest. Heigh ho! Why did he marry a woman so exquisitely handsome, that nothing short of a saint,—and Heaven knows I never set up to be one,—could have resisted her charms, or have failed to endeavour to rival him in her affection? And then to bring her to my house too! It was nothing short of madness. As well might one place untold heaps of gold within reach of a thief, and trust that he will not appropriate it, as throw beauty like Mrs. Stratford's in sight of a fellow like me, and think I could behold it without wishing to possess it. Really, such husbands bring on, by their own folly, the evils which common prudence or knowledge of the world might avert, and have only themselves to blame for the result."

By such sophistry as this did Lord Willamere

endeavour to silence the whispers of conscience, and after a brief time his self-reproach subsided into less painful feelings. He said to himself, that it was no use fretting about what could not be helped. He had not the money to free poor Stratford. When he got any, he would certainly do so (and he meant it at the time); but until then he would banish the whole affair from his mind: and he *did* banish it, by plunging into every species of amusement that offered, and by occupying his thoughts with more agreeable subjects. Yet this man, who after the lapse of a few days bestowed not a thought on the painful position to which my mother must be reduced, without money, and totally friendless, as he believed her and her husband to be, imagined that he had loved her! And so it is, that many heartless voluptuaries, like him, deceive themselves, and profane the sentiment of love, by mistaking the gross and sensual passion, which alone they are capable of feeling, for the pure and ennobling one which ever seeks the happiness of the object beloved, in preference to selfish enjoyment. Lord Willamere would,

after a few days had gone by, have forgotten the existence of the man whom he believed to be pining in a prison for *his* debts, had he not been reminded of it by piles of unopened and unanswered letters, the accumulation occasioned by Stratford's absence. He glanced with alarm on the heaps, which he had not sufficient moral courage to open, and dismissed his *maitre d'hotel*, Mr. Bermingham, angrily from his presence, for having reminded him that sundry creditors were impatient and clamorous for a settlement of their accounts, and that he had paid away his last shilling in discharging the various small items of daily expenditure; the latter assertion being wholly unfounded. The fact was, no sooner had the sapient Mr. Bermingham ascertained that Stratford was not likely to return to Willamere House, than he began to think of taking advantage of his absence. The circumstance of Mr. Stratford's so abruptly quitting it, as well as Sally's letting drop some hints of the dear lady being too good to stay in a house where some people didn't know how to treat an angel when under their roof, had led to

this conclusion on his part, and he determined on making an effort to increase the extent of his power, by busying himself in matters which had, hitherto, been exclusively confided to the jurisdiction of the secretary. He went to some of the least respectable of the tradespeople, made them understand that, henceforth, *he* would have the examination and arrangement of their accounts, and that, if made worth *his* while, he would not be so mean and scrupulous as Mr. Stratford, in regard to the quality or quantity of the articles furnished, and would be much more pressing with his lord for the payment of the bills. Urged on by the hope of a liberal percentage from these said tradesmen, Mr. Birmingham took the liberty of presenting himself, with a file of their bills, in the office of his lord and master; but his reception there was such as to convince him that he had miscalculated his powers of utility in a financial point of view: a discovery, however, which he carefully concealed from those most interested in the matter, and whom he deceived by promises he was aware that he had but little chance of performing.

To go on any longer without a private secretary, Lord Willamere felt to be impossible. He must, therefore, look out for one without loss of time; but, *en attendant*, how was he to get on, without money, until the next quarter's salary became due?

While he was reflecting on this point, a card, with a letter from a Mr. Humphry, was brought him. With Mr. Humphry his lordship had formerly had negotiations of rather a delicate nature, the result of which had been to transfer a certain number of hundreds of pounds into his lordship's purse, and an appointment of a certain yearly value to the brother of the said Mr. Humphry. The card reminded Lord Willamere of this fact, one which was never remembered without unpleasant twinges of conscience; for, to have given an appointment without any scrutiny into the character or capability of filling it of the person on whom it was conferred, was rendered still more blameable from the circumstance that pecuniary motives had induced this dereliction from honour and duty. His lordship's poverty, rather than his

will, had led to this culpable traffic; and this same cause operated as strongly at the present moment as on the former occasion.

“Yes; I will see Mr. Humphry,” said he to his servant, “show him into my study.”

Mr. Humphry, through the medium of some clerks in the government offices, with whom he kept up an acquaintance, managed to be generally *au fait* of appointments falling vacant, or about to be created. He now came to inform Lord Willamere that a certain one had fallen into his lordship's gift the previous night, through the death of the late holder, and he solicited it for a friend of his, a gentleman, as he said, of considerable abilities and high character; who, he added, was willing to pay a reasonable *douceur* for the appointment. Lord Willamere coloured, felt embarrassed for a moment, and had Mr. Humphry been skilled in reading the thoughts by the expression of the face, he would have discovered that his lordship had not yet entirely conquered the pride and delicacy peculiar to high-born men, before want of money, that leveller, and destroyer of such

sentiments, has blunted them. But Mr. Humphry, a total stranger to such feelings, was unsuspecting of their existence in the breasts of others, and attributed the heightened colour of Lord Willamere to satisfaction at the prospect of an advantageous treaty with him, rather than to a latent sense of shame and humiliation at entering into such reprehensible negotiations. The very place now become vacant was the one designed for poor Stratford, as the one formerly granted through Mr. Humphry's arrangement had also been. This recollection flashed through the mind of Lord Willamere, and a sigh of real but transient regret followed it. "This man," thought he, "is the evil genius of Stratford. This is the second time that he has stepped between him and fortune;" and something of dislike towards Mr. Humphry was mingled with regret for Stratford. How anxious are men to turn the blame *they* merit, to some one else! It never occurred to Lord Willamere, that his own reckless extravagance, entailing pecuniary embarrassments which rendered money indispensable for their relief, had prostrated the

honourable principles which ought to have precluded his having recourse to negotiations like those entered into with Mr. Humphry, and that these, and *not* that person, had defeated the interests of poor Stratford.

There are always Mr. Humphrys to be found, ready to avail themselves of the laxity of principle and pecuniary wants of men in power; but his lordship, anxious to throw the blame off his own shoulders to those of another, looked on Mr. Humphry as the evil genius, as he termed it, of his late secretary. He was silent for some moments, and his companion, imagining that his taciturnity originated in some mental calculation on the value of the appointment solicited, resumed the topic.

“Your lordship will not, I hope, be very unreasonable in your demands.”

Lord Willamere’s cheeks again glowed, and he would have liked to have kicked his visitor out of the room, but he nevertheless vanquished his indignation, and observed that “the appointment was rather a lucrative one, and, consequently, a consideration in proportion to its value was naturally to be expected;” adding,

that "as it was promised to another," (an assertion the truth of which Mr. Humphry wholly disbelieved, and took to be only made as a plea for a larger *douceur* for the appointment,) "he could not break his promise, unless the temptation to do so was very strong indeed."

This paltering with his own honour, or rather with the slight portion of it that still remained in his heart, cost Lord Willamere no inconsiderable effort; but he was urged on to it by the recollection of certain pressing debts of honour, the non-payment of which would compromise him in society; and also—yes, positively, Reader—also by the remembrance, that only through a supply to be obtained by the present mode, could he release poor Stratford from prison. This last reflection silenced his wavering scruples. He fancied that the *end* justified the *means*; nay, more, grown bold by something resembling a gleam of self-satisfaction, he determined to insist on a larger remuneration for the appointment than he might otherwise have been disposed to require.

"Well, my lord, what sum will your lordship

really be satisfied with?" demanded Mr. Humphry, a little crest-fallen at the gravity of Lord Willamere, which he shrewdly guessed augured that the appointment would not be obtained on what he called reasonable terms.

"I will not accept a sous less than two thousand guineas," replied his lordship.

"Two thousand guineas is a very large sum, my lord, for my friend to sink. I had hoped that half that sum, or, at most, fifteen hundred pounds, would have been considered sufficient."

The *fierté* of the nobleman was not all gone, although the honour and probity of the man had departed. Lord Willamere drew himself up to his full height; and when he did so, there was a dignity in his demeanour that seldom failed to produce an effect on those with whom he wished it to be successful. Mr. Humphry saw at a glance that no less than the sum named would be accepted. Nevertheless, he made one more attempt to economise some additional sum, however small, for himself.

"I am then to understand, my lord, that two thousand *pounds* is your ultimatum?"

“ I said guineas, sir,” was the reply, uttered with as stately an air as if the speaker had never degraded himself, or was not even at the moment engaged in a transaction contrary to his duty.

“ Well, my lord, the money shall be forthcoming the day that my friend is gazetted to the appointment.”

Lord Willamere bit his nether lip ; and, after a pause, said, “ that half the sum would be very acceptable to him at that time.”

“ There’s many things between the cup and the lip, my lord,” observed Mr. Humphry.

“ You don’t mean to insinuate, that having pledged myself to bestow the appointment on your friend, I would break my promise ?” demanded the peer angrily.

“ I beg pardon, my lord ; but, as your lordship confessed to me a short time ago that you had promised this very appointment to another, I thought”—and here Mr. Humphry abruptly stopped, for the glance of offended dignity and fierceness of the earl, rendered him fearful of finishing the sentence he had been about to

utter, which meant nothing more nor less, than to state in as civil terms as such an insulting suspicion could be worded, that he feared his lordship might, after receiving the money, bestow the appointment on another.

The pride which is not sufficiently strong to prevent a man from committing an unworthy action, often survives the heavy blows inflicted on it by his turpitude, and by the pangs it occasions, avenges his misdeeds. Lord Willamere positively writhed under the agony of the insult implied by Mr. Humphry's interrupted speech; yet such was the thralldom in which his pecuniary difficulties had plunged him, that he feared to break off the agreement which he had but just completed, by giving utterance to the anger he felt. He again bit his lip; and although the sudden pallor which replaced the flush of rage that but a moment before had crimsoned his brow, betrayed the internal struggle, he smoothed his countenance, and observed—  
“ O! I understand, Mr. Humphry; you meant to say that the uncertainty of life might prevent my fulfilling the pledge.”

"Yes, my lord, precisely; that is exactly what I meant to say," replied Mr. Humphry, inwardly smiling at the favourable interpretation of his doubts given by his lordship.

"There is one way in which this can be arranged. If you will let me have five hundred guineas to-day, and your note of hand, payable on the day when your friend is gazetted, for the remaining sum of fifteen hundred guineas, I will give you my note for five hundred guineas, which note you will return me the day the appointment is gazetted."

Mr. Humphry was afraid of refusing these conditions, lest he should too far offend the peer; nor dared he avow that his lordship's bill for five hundred guineas was not worth as many sixpences in his opinion, although such was the fact. He, therefore, determined to risk the money; and, drawing from his pocket-book a blank cheque, filled it up for the amount, and handed it to his lordship, who bowed him out with his accustomed dignity.

"I have not made a bad thing of it after all," thought Mr. Humphry, as he left Willamere

House, "although I had hoped to have made a better. His lordship is not so hard up as I thought, or he would have accepted fifteen hundred instead of two thousand. I shall put one thousand in my pocket by this transaction after all, for I persuaded Gilchrist that there was no chance of getting the appointment for less than three thousand. I wish now I had said *four*; and so I would have done, had I anticipated that his lordship would have stood out so firmly for the two thousand. But it can't be helped now. I must only try to make it up next time. Bless my stars, how proud these lords can be, when anything excites their mettle! Why, hang me, if he didn't draw himself up two inches at least above his natural stature, when I was going to ask what security I was to have if I paid the money down, that he mightn't give the place to some one else! He's a queer'un, that's what he is. Not above doing a wrong action, but greatly above being told he has done it."

## CHAPTER X.

“AND now for releasing poor Stratford,” said Lord Willamere, as his vulgar visitor departed. “I should like to go to him myself, but I have not courage to meet him, after that unlucky scene with his wife. With *his* notions, he could, I am sure, ill brook my presence; so I must send Spellerman to liberate him. I must first, however, get this cheque cashed.” And putting the said cheque in his waistcoat pocket, Lord Willamere rang the bell, and ordered his brougham to be at the door as soon as possible.

“Your lordship’s groom has just been here to say that the bay horse is lame to-day.”

“The devil it is! Well then, tell him to have the brown horse harnessed.”

“The brown, my lord, was sent, last evening,

to the job-man's, to be exchanged for another, for it was off its feed for the last two days, and the job-man, your lordship, sent word that he had not a horse to take his place."

"What the devil does the fellow mean? Does he suppose that I am to pay him extravagant prices for job-horses, and he is not to keep others in readiness to supply their places in case of accidents?"

"The groom said, my lord, that the job-man seemed very careless, and, in short, my lord, was anything but civil," observed Mr. Bermingham; who, for reasons of his own, was very desirous that his lord and master's custom should be transferred to another job-man, a particular friend of his, who promised not only to supply him with a quiet and sure-footed nag whenever he wished to ride, but to allow him a certain percentage on the account, if he procured him Lord Willamere's custom.

"What a bore!" exclaimed his lordship. "Have my saddle-horses round as soon as possible, and I will call and reprimand Mr. Wilkinson."

“ I hope his lordship won't let out what I said about the job-man being careless and uncivil, for, if he does, the truth may come out. I only said it just to get his lordship to take away his custom from him, for it's no use letting a fellow go on serving with horses who won't give a percentage, when I know a man who will.”

Lord Willamere was half inclined to send Bermingham to the bank, with the cheque, but a dislike to that person's seeing whose signature was to it, prevented his employing him on this occasion. He therefore rode to the bank, took the amount of the cheque in bank notes, and turned his horse's head towards the office of Mr. Spellerman, determined to give that gentleman wherewithal to release poor Stratford from prison, and a further sum towards the payment of the arrears of his salary. Lord Willamere felt such a real satisfaction in the prospect of discharging this duty, that it almost reconciled him to the means by which such an end was to be attained. His mind was relieved from a weight that had oppressed it ever since the arrest of Stratford for his debt, and could he

have banished the recollection of his unsuccessful suit to the wife of that individual, he would have been comparatively happy. That, however, still rankled in his breast, and inflicted as deep a mortification on his vanity as on his heart. Unluckily for Lord Willamere's good intentions, the yard of the job-man with whom he dealt lay on the route to Mr. Spellerman's office; and more unluckily still, just as his lordship was passing the door, the job-man himself was entering it. Lord Willamere immediately dismounted, for the purpose of expostulating on the alleged complaints made against that person, and for insisting on having fresh horses sent in place of those incapable of doing their work. Nothing could exceed the civility of Mr. Wilkinson, except it was his regret that he had not, at the moment, any horses worthy to replace those jobbed to his lordship. He would do anything in the world to please or oblige his lordship, but what could he do? Horses never were so dear, or money so scarce, as at the present time. Although thousands of pounds were due to him, he could not call in even a few

hundreds. The nobility and gentry didn't like being asked for money, and he hoped none of 'em could say that *he* ever dunned 'em. No; he knew his place better.

This last hint appealed powerfully to Lord Willamere's feelings, by reminding him, that for the last three years, he had only paid a very small portion of his large account to Mr. Wilkinson.

To be sure, resumed that person, three of the finest horses he had seen for many years were that morning offered to him for sale, and at a very reasonable price too. Five hundred pounds were demanded; but ready money only would be accepted. He really had not that sum at command. If he had, he would not have hesitated a moment, for the horses were well worth seven hundred and fifty pounds. But what could he do? His lordship might look at them, if he pleased, for the owner had left them in the stable for a few hours, on the chance of their being seen by one of his customers.

“There can be no harm in just looking at

them," thought Lord Willamere, as he followed Mr. Wilkinson to the stable.

"Lead out the horses, Tom," said Mr. Wilkinson.

"Yes, sir," replied Tom, pulling down a fore lock of his hair, as a mark of respect.

"Just trot 'em out a bit."

The horses were trotted out; Mr. Wilkinson pointing out their perfections with all the *gusto* of a connoisseur, and the *savoir faire valoir* of an experienced dealer.

"Never saw finer steppers in my life, my lord. What capital action! There is not their match to be found in all England. I only wish I wasn't so poor at this moment, and I'd buy them at once, and job them to your lordship. I'd be sorry to see 'em with any one else, that's the truth of it, for I take a pleasure in furnishing your lordship's equipages with my best horses. Only I make it a point never to dun any nobleman, I'd just request your lordship to let me have enough money on account to secure these fine horses, for it will really hurt me to see them go to some one else."

Lord Willamere could no longer resist the temptation held out to him. Poor Stratford, in his prison, faded away before the pleasure of becoming the possessor of the finest horses, and greatest bargain in all England; or, if he *was* remembered, it was with a shake of the head, and a "*Que voulez-vous?*" He can be released the moment I get the 1500 guineas from Humphry, which must be in a few days, and a week sooner or later can make no great difference to him, after all.

"Well, Mr. Wilkinson, as you are in such want of money, I will enable you to buy these horses." And Lord Willamere drew forth the 500*l.*, and transferred them to the dealer's hand; and *he*, quite as much surprised as delighted at so unexpected a payment, pocketed the money, bowed his lordship to the door, promising that the horses should be forthwith sent to the stables of Willamere House, and when the peer had departed, rubbed his hands and smiled at the reflection that he had done a profitable day's work; he having, some days previously, bought the said horses at a country fair, for two hundred.

“ He’d have seen me far enough,” thought Mr. Wilkinson, “ before he’d have paid me five hundred pounds in one slap, if he had not been kept with jaded nags the last few months, and had not set his heart on having these. How easy it is to *do* even the sharpest of these lords and gentlemen, when one knows how to go about it ! I’d bet five pounds that if his dearest friend had offered his lordship these same nags for one half the money, he wouldn’t have given it. No, we are the persons to do ’em.”

When my father and mother were summoned to the hospitable board of Mr. Manvers, they found his two daughters, interesting-looking girls, of the ages of nine and ten, with him. “ Martha and Mary, this lady,” bowing to my mother, “ will, I hope, be so good as to remain some time in this house, and I trust, my dear girls, that your conduct will be such as to merit her approbation and conciliate her esteem. You, madam, will, I hope, overlook any little shyness and awkwardness on their parts,” continued Mr. Manvers, “ and take into consideration their not having had a mother’s care.” And here the lips

of the speaker became tremulous with emotion. My mother shook hands with the little girls, who met her advances to acquaintanceship with gentleness and cordiality; and then the little party, marshalled by the kind host, took their seats at table.

Nothing could exceed the attention evinced by Mr. Manvers towards his guests; and there was such a perfect freedom from ceremony, yet such a respectful deference mingled with his cordiality, that both husband and wife felt that they were welcomed guests, and that their presence, far from imposing any constraint, conferred a pleasure on their host. It was true, he pressed them to partake of the good things set before them, with an earnest warmth that might, at the tables of persons in a more elevated class of life, be deemed homely, if not vulgar; it being now considered, in the highest circles, unnecessary, if not unbecoming, to show that attention towards guests formerly so generally adopted by hosts and hostesses, who are now content to let the duty of offering the dishes to those assembled at their tables devolve on the servants;

they themselves appearing more as guests than masters or mistresses of the feast. But, in the peculiar position of those now at his table, this homely cordiality on the part of Mr. Manvers was very acceptable, and served greatly to put them at their ease. The doting, yet judiciously displayed affection of the widowed father to his little daughters, and their gentleness and docility, conciliated the esteem and good-will of my parents, who felt their confidence in the goodness of heart of their host greatly increased by thus witnessing his unaffected kindness in his domestic circle, and the tenderness of his children toward him. It was long since his visitors had experienced such kindness as they met with beneath the roof of Mr. Manvers. Unskilled in the ceremonious usages of society, this good man allowed his feelings to take their natural course, which led to a warmth of welcome unchecked by the reserve usually maintained towards persons comparatively strangers, on a first visit.

My mother cast many an anxious glance to her husband, whose pallor, and total loss of ap-

petite, alarmed and distressed her ; for, although their kind host pressed him to eat, and repeatedly engaged him to do honour to his old sherry, he scarcely touched the good things set before him, and at length acknowledged that he felt too feverish to venture on drinking wine.

“You must not be cast down, Mr. Stratford,” said Mr. Manvers ; “only take care of your health, and I will procure you enough occupation, ay, and well paid occupation too, to secure your comfort and independence. I began the world with far less advantages than you possess. I had not your fine education, and, like you, was an orphan. I had nothing but a willing spirit, an active turn of mind, and a thorough conviction of the truth of the old proverb, that honesty is the best policy. The world has prospered with me. I am now well to do in life. If it pleased God to take me away to-morrow, I have wherewithal to provide amply and handsomely for these dear little girls, and have nothing to reproach myself with in the manner in which my fortune has been acquired. Take courage by my example, my good sir. You are

still a young man, with plenty of years before you to work, and leave your little miss as well off as both my girls will be after my death."

The two daughters of Mr. Manvers no sooner heard him utter the word death, than they rose, and with tears in their eyes ran to him, and, clinging to his neck, clasped him in their arms, as if they would shield him from the fell destroyer, whose very name filled their innocent hearts with terror. That terrible name was associated in their youthful minds with the loss of a dearly-loved mother, still fondly remembered. They had seen her fade away, day by day; her checks become paler, her eyes more lustrous; they had noticed her voice, always low and gentle, grow still more faint, when, with accents tremulous with love and emotion, she addressed the tender watchers around her couch—that couch she was doomed to leave no more. They saw her still lovely in death, before the coffin-lid shut out that calm pale face for ever from their sight; and they beheld that coffin, covered with its funeral pall, borne from the home, in which her presence had

been wont to diffuse happiness. They remembered all this; hence, never did they hear the solemn word Death, pronounced, that word so often irreverently uttered, without deep emotion; and when their father referred to his own decease, they flew to him as if they could save him from the approach of the King of Terrors.

Mr. Manvers well understood what was passing in their innocent hearts; and *his* thoughts, too, were with the dead, as he pressed with almost womanly fondness his motherless children to his breast.

My father and mother were not indifferent spectators of this little scene. A gloomy presentiment, often the forerunner of danger, flashed through the thoughts of my poor father, as an internal feeling of pain and debility impressed him with a sense of his own ruined health. He looked at his poor wife, bethought himself of how desolate *her* lot would be, and his child too, and tears rushed into his eyes. My mother believed that they arose from sympathy with the feelings of their host, and she loved him the more for this new proof of his

sensibility, so perfectly in unison with her own. Had she known the real source of his emotion, how dreadful would have been her state! but “God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,” and she was to be yet for a time spared the wretchedness of knowing the affliction impending over her.

Mr. Manvers had been too well accustomed to watch the incipient approaches of the fearful malady that had snatched from him the wife of his bosom, not to feel some alarm as he marked the pallid brow of Stratford, and the bright hectic spot that frequently showed itself on his cheek.

A cough, that seemed to shake the chest of the sufferer, added to the alarm of his host, while my mother, from never previously having witnessed the insidious approaches of the disease, although anxious about what she believed to be but a temporary indisposition, was wholly ignorant of the extent of the danger that menaced a life infinitely dearer to her than her own. Mr. Manvers immediately called in the best medical aid; but to avoid alarming the patient, arranged

that Dr. Rysdale was to drop in, as if by chance, be introduced as a friend of the host, and, by degrees, gain the confidence of both the husband and wife, and prescribe for the former.

When pressed by my father to inquire about a situation for him,—for the delicacy of the sick man made him recoil from trespassing on the hospitality of his kind friend,—Mr. Manvers would say, “Don’t be uneasy, I can find you a situation any day, but you must first re-establish your health; that is the first point to be attended to, every thing else is subordinate to it.”

Anxious to render herself useful, and in some way to repay the obligations conferred by Mr. Manvers, Mrs. Stratford devoted three hours of every day to the instruction of his children. Their docility and aptitude in learning, rendered her task a labour of love; and their progress delighted their fond parent so much, that he blessed the hour when he secured them, even for a limited time, the advantages of such an instructress.

But the peacefulness of his asylum, and the

kindness of his host, availed not to check the ravages of the disease which was preying on the frame of Stratford. His cheek became daily more pale and shrunken; his eye more glassy, and his cough more frequent and harassing. Sleep and appetite forsook him; and his physician acknowledged to Mr. Manvers, that the remedies he had hitherto administered had, to his great regret and disappointment, produced no salutary effect. He suggested the propriety of seeking change of air; not, as he admitted, that he hoped any very material change from it; nevertheless it was right, he thought, to try every chance of preserving a life so valuable to Mr. Stratford's wife and child.

Mr. Manvers immediately engaged a house at Brompton, surrounded by a cheerful garden, sent to it many of the comforts so seldom to be found in lodging-houses; and in a very few days after the change of air had been recommended, he announced to the grateful couple that all was ready for their reception at their new abode. "When Mr. Stratford's health is restored, as I trust in God it soon will

be," said the worthy man, "my girls will, with your permission, Madam," addressing Mrs. Stratford, "take up their abode with you, at the house I have taken for you."

Mr. and Mrs. Stratford possessed minds and hearts, not only fully capable of appreciating the generosity and delicacy of Mr. Manvers' conduct towards them, but fully capable of emulating it towards others, had fortune enabled them to do so. The consciousness of this sentiment in their own breasts rendered their sense of obligations to their kind friend less painful and humiliating than if they themselves were less generously disposed; and Mrs. Stratford hoped a day might come, when it would be in his power to prove her deep sense of the favours conferred on her and her husband, in their hour of need.

## CHAPTER XI.

NEITHER my father nor mother were persons who could feel happy while depending solely on the charity or kindness of others. In proportion to the warm sense they entertained of the generosity exercised towards them, was their dread of trespassing too much on it; and while those with less delicacy would have enjoyed the present advantages afforded them, without any scruple, they shrank from the bare idea of encroaching on a hospitality, the value of which no one could better appreciate. They had a spirit of honest independence, as far removed from false pride as from ingratitude, that led them to wish to *earn* their daily bread by their own exertions; and they felt that to live *in idleness*, though even but for a short time, would be too painful and humili-

ating, owing, as they already did, so weighty an obligation to Mr. Manvers. "Let us at least, for a few days, rest in peace and quiet here, dearest," said my mother, as she marked the pale face and thoughtful brow of her dejected husband; "Mr. Manvers, who is so considerate and kind, may be able to hear of some situation or occupation, by which we can earn a subsistence. I can, perhaps, through the medium of his extensive connexions and recommendations, go out to give lessons as a daily governess; and with your talents and knowledge, it will be hard, indeed, if we cannot find means to live."

My father tried to smile an assent to his wife's hopes and projects; but the smile was so faint, so sickly, that it indicated how much less sanguine were his expectations than hers. A secret presentiment filled his heart, that the slow fever, occasioned by anxiety, which had so long been undermining his health, and which the events of the last two days had greatly increased, had struck at the vital principle; and as he looked on his adored wife and child, likely

to be soon left unprovided for and friendless, in a world in which he had found only endless toil, repaid by deceit and ingratitude, from him for whom he had used his best exertions, a cold shudder came over him, and he almost wished that they, too, might share the sleep of death, which he felt an internal conviction would soon be his. The base conduct of Lord Willamere had wounded my father to the heart's core, and struck at the very root of his life. In vain had he endeavoured to seek a refuge from the bitter thoughts that preyed on his very existence, in the deep contempt which conduct like that of Lord Willamere was so well calculated to inspire in a noble mind and generous heart like his. But his natural sensibility was stronger than his acquired philosophy, and triumphed over every effort which the latter suggested, to pluck forth the poisoned arrow from his heart. My father, too, was a proud, though a poor man, and could ill brook the bitter knowledge, that the wife of his bosom—the only being who had ever loved him, or whom he had loved—should have her name made the subject of

slander, or be profaned by the ribald jests of the heartless voluptuaries who associated with the libertine Lord Willamere. And now hope, the delusive syren, had ceased to cheat him. A conviction of his own state, and its probable result, had taken possession of his mind ; and the prospect of being torn from his wife and child, fraught with bitterness, excited his affection for those beloved objects into a morbid tenderness, that served to aggravate the fatal disease that was preying on him. His eyes would follow his wife wheresoever she moved, or dwell on their child, until tears of human fondness, wrung from him by the thought that he must soon leave those dear beings, would fill them.

There is a love, so deep, so devoted, that the thought of leaving the object of it is too terrible to be entertained, even for a moment ; and the heart turns with the same instinctive shudder from such a possibility, as the body shrinks from the scalpel of the surgeon who comes prepared to perform some horrible operation on it. Such was the love of my

mother for her husband. Not a change in his pale face, not an alteration in his burning hand, escaped her; and every symptom in his malady was noted with a fearful exactness, that proved but too well how she marked the phases of it. Yet, though she saw him day after day grow more weak, and heard the cruel cough that shook his poor chest, as if it would burst it, she dared not anticipate the terrible result of all this suffering, and clung to hope, though there was no longer anchorage for it. Oh! how the fear of parting increases affection, those only can tell who have experienced the agony of beholding the person dearest in life in danger. Then it is, that the chain of affection seems newly rivetted, as if to resist the possibility of being rent asunder; and that the love previously felt, however fond, however true, appears light in comparison with the actual present, when to all the past is added the vague, but terrible dread of the future; that future, when even the happiness of watching over the invalid may be denied, and the cold grave may contain the form for which no couch that

love can smooth, is now deemed sufficiently soft.

“No, it won’t, it can’t be,” would my mother say to herself, when some fearful anticipation of losing her adored husband almost made her heart die within her tortured breast. “It would be too, too terrible. God is too good, too merciful, to try me so far beyond my strength to bear. No; he will not be taken from me. He may live, denied the blessing of health, and all its enjoyments; be a helpless invalid, confined to one chamber; but this, even this, will be happiness to me, compared with the dread, the horror of losing him for ever; of feeling alone, in a cold and pitiless world, after having known the blessing, the unutterable blessing, of a love like his.”

The day arrived that my father was to be removed from the house of Mr. Manvers to the one taken for him at Brompton. A hired carriage, of the most easy and comfortable kind that could be procured, was engaged to convey him, into which he was assisted by his kind friend, with two of his clerks, and propped up

by pillows; and his head resting on the shoulder of his wife, the female servant and child occupying the opposite seat of the vehicle, he was driven towards Brompton.

It was a bright and beautiful day. The streets were filled with gaily dressed persons; innumerable carriages and equestrians were passing along on every side, which gave the air of a *fête* day to the whole scene. What a contrast did it offer to the feelings of the hapless pair, who turned from it with sadness, as if the bright sunshine and gaiety around them increased their sense of the desolation of their own hearts. What to them were the emblazoned carriages whirled along by proud and stately steeds; the gaudy-liveried menials that belonged to them; and the richly dressed occupants, who bestowed not even a passing glance on the humble vehicle that was conveying them to the quiet home where they were to await the sentence that was to decide the fate of both, the sentence of life or death to my father! This pair, in the midst of a gay and busy population, each member of which was occupied

solely with his or her own cares, or pleasures, felt that *they* were alone. Shut out from the sympathies of those among whom they glided, they were, as some poor and humble stream that flows into the ocean, lost and confounded in the vast mass into which they were plunged, and they instinctively pressed closer to each other, as this conviction forced itself on their minds. Their passage was obstructed by the crowd around the gates at Hyde Park, assembled in the hope of seeing the Sovereign pass, and for some minutes their carriage could not move on. My mother would fain have escaped the careless and indifferent glances of the gay personages, whose eyes, for a brief moment, rested on the pale face of her husband, and then turned, with an altered expression, to hers,—for beauty, however chastened by sorrow, is always attractive to the idle loungers of fashion; but she dreaded to avert her head, lest the movement should derange that of the dear invalid resting on her shoulder, and so only cast down her eyes when the inquisitive and impertinent gaze

of the equestrians, who peered into the carriage, caused the blood to mount to her delicate cheek.

“Look there, Willamere; did you ever behold a more lovely face?” exclaimed a fashionable looking man to his companion, directing his attention to the humble vehicle of my parents; “by Jove! the sick man is to be envied, for possessing so beautiful a nurse.”

Lord Willamere turned quickly round, ever anxious in his search for beauty, and his glance met the death-like face of his poor secretary, whose languid eye rested for a moment on his countenance, and then closed, as if to shut out some object too painful to be longer contemplated. A momentary pang shot through the libertine’s heart, as his eye took in the face of the dying man, for that my father was dying, he felt as convinced as of his own identity. From him his eyes turned to the face of my mother, which, though still beautiful as ever, was impressed with such care and sadness, as proclaimed that she had suffered much since they had last met. She had not seen Lord Willamerè, for, distressed by the gaze of his

companion, she had avoided again looking in the direction where he was; but her husband had recognised him, and the shudder that shook his frame alarmed her so much, that she feared some sudden change for the worse in his health had occasioned it. "It was only a spasm, dearest," replied my father, in answer to her inquiry, "I shall be better when we are out of this crowd."

The sight of the man he had loved and trusted, but who had so basely betrayed the confidence he had reposed in his honour, greatly agitated the weak frame of the poor invalid, and although he struggled to conquer his emotion, and named not the subject to his wife, it became evident to her that some sudden change had occurred, which deteriorated his previous state. Lord Willamere looked no more towards the carriage which contained those he had so deeply injured. Remorse, an unusual visitor in his heart, had found entrance, and his aspect underwent such an alteration, that when his companion again demanded his opinion of the beautiful woman he had pointed out, he asked him if he felt unwell.

“Only a slight head-ache,” was the answer. A slight heart-ache, would have been nearer the truth.

“I’ve a great mind to follow the carriage and discover where this beauty dwells,” said Sir Henry Riverstock.

“You will gain nothing by it,” observed Lord Willamere, “for the lady is evidently a modest woman.”

“No other would be worth the trouble of pursuit,” was the reply, “forbidden fruit alone is tempting.”

“But even so warm an admirer of beauty and modesty as Sir Henry Riverstock, might pause before he subjects a woman in affliction, as the one we have just seen evidently is, to annoyance by a pursuit wholly unencouraged by even a glance of hers,” rejoined the peer.

There was a sarcastic severity in the tone and manner of Lord Willamere, as he uttered these words, that instantly led his companion to conclude that his lordship had a more than ordinary interest in the fair unknown. His sudden change of countenance the moment

after he saw her, and his ill-dissembled anxiety to prevent him from following her carriage confirmed his suspicions, and decided him on pursuing the bent of his own inclinations, by keeping the vehicle in view.

“I had no notion, my dear Willamere,” said the baronet, “that you were so considerate of the feelings of those who attract your admiration, as your advice just now given would lead me to suppose. Come, be frank and own the truth. Have you not tried to dissuade me from following this *belle incognita*, merely because you intend to take a similar step yourself?”

Lord Willamere, albeit unused to blush, felt his cheeks glow at this charge; but recovering his self-possession, he asserted on his word of honour that he had no such intention.

“Then you have more self-control, or less admiration for the lady than I possess,” observed Sir Henry Riverstock, “so adieu;” and he turned his horse’s head towards the road to Kensington, the direction which the carriage in which my parents were had taken, and soon

overtook it. He had, however, sufficient sense, if not delicacy, to remain behind the carriage, desirous of not offending the lovely woman it contained, until he reached the spot where the road leads off on the left to Brompton, where he met Mr. Addington, one of the *roué* cronies of Lord Willamere. This gentleman had seen and recognised my parents, and the encounter had brought back fresh to his mind his having formerly met them at Willamere House, and the scandal that Lord Henry Middlecourt and he had then imagined, and afterwards circulated relative to the supposed *liaison* between Lord Willamere and the handsome Mrs. Stratford, as also of the secretary's connivance at the intrigue.

“How-d’ye-do, Riverstock,” exclaimed Mr. Addington. “I’ve just seen in that fly,” pointing to the one in front, “a devilish beautiful woman; a flame of Willamere’s, and the wife of his secretary, who, *par parenthèse*, looks as if he is not likely to trouble his frail rib long with his presence. The poor devil is evidently dying.”

“Hah! hah! my Lord Willamere, I have caught you, have I?” soliloquized Sir Henry Riverstock. “This explains your anxiety to prevent my following the carriage of the fair one. Would you believe it, Addington, when I pointed out the lady in question to Willamere, believing that he had never seen her before, the sly dog affected not to know her; and when I proposed to ride after her carriage in order to discover her abode, he preached me as moral a lesson as if he were a saint, and I only a sinner. But are you quite sure, my dear fellow, that the lady is the person you assert her to be?”

“Perfectly. I recognised her at one glance. Indeed she is too pretty to be easily mistaken for another. I once passed some hours in her company, much to her dissatisfaction, I dare be sworn, for she looked deucedly put out of her way by the intrusion of Henry Middlecourt and myself into the dining-room of Willamere, where she, her *cara sposo*, and his lordship, made a trio at dessert, quite *en famille*. Willamere wished us anywhere else, I could plainly

see, and endeavoured to dupe us; by assuming towards the lady as deferential an air as if she were a duchess, instead of the wife of his secretary; who, poor man, was enjoying his fruit to all appearance wholly unconscious that he stood in a peculiarly false position, as either a dishonourable, or a deceived husband."

"I am sorry I must leave you," said Sir Henry Riverstock, "for I have an engagement, so good bye."

"*A bonne fortune*, I conclude," was the reply; "for those are the only engagements men attend to in our times;" and off rode Mr. Addington to London, while the baronet galloped briskly after the carriage which held the object that had excited so great an interest in his breast.

When some days before Lord Willamere had paid away the money to Mr. Wilkinson the horse-dealer, and secured the horses, agreeing to give an increased yearly stipend for their hire on job, in consideration of the great price that person alleged he had given for them, he rode away in a different direction from that which he

had originally intended taking. It was now useless, he felt, to see Mr. Spelburne, as he had no longer the money to give him to liberate my father. "Well, after all, a few days more or less incarceration can't be of much consequence to him," thought the peer; "a lock-up house is, I understand, no very bad place—a sort of ready-furnished lodging, as I have heard, only different from others, inasmuch as the lodger is not permitted to leave it until the proprietor is quite satisfied that there is no detainer remaining there against him. Heaven be praised, I have no personal experience of those sort of places! Glorious privilege of the peerage! which keeps us, the porcelain of human clay, safe from such contamination. Yes, I dare say Stratford has his comforts around him; his beautiful wife by his side! Who would not submit to a prison to secure a *tête-à-tête* with such a creature? He is not much to be pitied with such a companion. Yet husbands are such strange dogs, especially after a year of marriage, that a prison might seem to a benedict no less gloomy with a wife than without one. I'll

certainly relieve poor Stratford the moment I receive the money from Mr. Humphrey, and that must be in a few days. *En attendant*, I will think no more of him, which will be much the wisest plan, for boring myself about his imprisonment can do *him* no good, and would only put me into the blue devils. I certainly am a devilish kind-hearted fellow in the main, for I have had no fewer than a dozen disagreeable twinges of conscience since poor Stratford was arrested on my account; and if I had not so much philosophy as I possess, I should really have been as gloomy as a gamester on awaking in the morning, after he has lost his last guinea. Yes, philosophy is a marvellously good thing in such emergencies. It consoles us wonderfully in the misfortunes that befall our friends. It is a pity it is not so successful in those that assail ourselves."

An organ, played by an Italian boy, at that moment struck up a merry tune, and this incident, so trifling in itself, gave an entire change to the thoughts of Lord Willamere. Strange power of music, to abstract us from the actual

present, and transport us to other scenes! The tune was a favourite one with the Duchess of Rosehampton, and Willamere had, during the heyday of his passion for that lovely, but erring woman, often danced with her to its measure. A vision of her sparkling eyes and sweet smile at such moments flashed on his memory, and he bethought him of his past triumphs, when, envied by half the men who helped to fill the gilded *salons de bal* in the great houses in London, he led the lovely duchess, sparkling in diamonds, and “the observed of all observers,” through the mazy dance. There had been more of sentiment in Willamere’s unhallowed *liaison* with the Duchess, than in any other of his numerous *bonnes fortunes*. The reason was, that she was not as lightly won as his other conquests. Poor woman! Nature meant her to be something better than a mere leader of the ton; one of those heartless, soulless butterflies, who bask in the sunshine of fashion, and waste their lives in its frivolous pursuits and pleasures.

Left an orphan while yet in infancy, she had,

unhappily, no watchful mother to instill precepts of religion and morality into her mind, to watch over her youth, and to guide her through the perils that beset the path of the young and fair. She had no father or brother to shield her from the advances of the worthless or designing, or to warn her ere she irrevocably bestowed her hand on one undeserving the boon. Left to the guardianship of a distant relation, who thought he was conscientiously fulfilling the charge consigned to him, when he engaged a governess, strongly recommended by a lady of high rank, to preside over the instruction of his fair ward, and duly attended to the care of her large fortune, the Lady Adelaide St. John grew up to be an accomplished woman. She was an admirable musician; drew in a masterly style; danced almost too well for a lady, as many matrons with daughters less skilled in the science of Terpsichore, and the said daughters themselves, averred; rode like an amazon; walked like a Diana; and was so naturally graceful, that her every movement enhanced the rare beauty of her face and

figure. But while no pains nor expense were spared in perfecting her accomplishments, her moral training had been wholly neglected. With warm feelings, a kind heart, and its too frequent accompaniment, a quick temper, she was never taught to regulate the first, nor to control the latter. She would melt with pity over a tale of distress, yet the next moment inflict pain by some ebullition of anger occasioned by a trifle. She wished all around her to be happy, would have willingly made any sacrifice to accomplish this, was incapable of any malice, but expected, as a right, that she herself was to be also exempt from the ills to which human flesh are heirs. She was impatient under the trials that await even the most favoured of Fortune's pets, and resented as a personal injury any *contre temps* that militated against her schemes of pleasure. There was so much goodness in her nature, that a skilful hand might have easily eradicated the weeds that had sprung up in the too rich soil; but unfortunately Madame de Tremonville was the last person in the world to discover their roots;

or, even had she marked them, to pluck them out. The warmth of her pupil's feelings she cherished, rather than attempted to regulate: Her kindness of heart she loved, nay, almost idolized her for, because innumerable and gratifying proofs of it were continually evinced towards herself; and her quickness of temper was tolerated, if not encouraged, as demonstrative of genius, which Madame de Tremonville declared was always accompanied by a certain vivacity of temper, as is exemplified by the term "*genus irritabile*," always applied to clever persons.

Married while yet little more than a child, the duke, though tenderly attached to her, was so wholly engrossed by politics as to have little time to devote to his beautiful and inexperienced wife, who, left without a guide to advise, or a friend to guard her, soon became engulfed in the vortex of fashion.

Such was the woman who had fallen a prey to the artful and practised seducer, Lord Willamere; and who, haunted by the remorse which never fails, sooner or later, to follow

unhallowed *liaisons*, now wept in anguish her lapse from virtue, and the ingratitude of him who, having been “loved, not wisely but too well,” had lured her from it. Fierce was the war which love, pride, and remorse waged in her tortured breast, even while yet her seducer, unsated by possession, proved by his unremitting attention, the passion he felt for her. Every hour of his absence found her wretched. She trembled before the unsuspecting husband, whose honour she had betrayed in forfeiting her own. Every word of kindness from him seemed like a dagger plunged into her heart, and made her feel ready to fall at his feet, avow her guilt, and draw on her head all its humiliating, its fearful consequences. Her depression of spirits, her altered looks, the traces of tears so often visible on her pale cheeks, alarmed, and excited a fresh interest in her fond husband, every proof of which inflicted agony on the wretched woman. She hardly dared to meet his glance, and fancied that even indifferent spectators could read on her brow the stamp of shame. She trembled before

her servants ; for they, as she rightly imagined, must have formed their own conclusions on the frequency of Lord Willamere's visits, and of her interviews with him in Kensington Gardens. Such had been the state of her feelings for some time, when her lover, who had been of late so remiss in his attentions as to alarm her pride, and wound her affection, surprised her by a visit. The vision his memory had conjured up, by the aid of the tune played by the organ in the street, had induced this tardy visit. He cheated himself into the expectation of finding her radiant in beauty as before tears of repentance had stained her cheeks, and dimmed the lustre of her eyes, and he fancied that, after a few reproaches, uttered more in sorrow than in anger, she would accept the falsehoods he meant to urge in extenuation of his neglect. But her changed aspect, her impaired beauty, and evidently destroyed health, which might have awakened pity in the sternest breast, excited only anger in his callous one. He reproached, instead of attempting to soothe her. Asked how she could hope that

after having committed the suicide of her own beauty, she could retain the heart it had enthralled, and whether any lover could give up his time to one who was always steeped in tears. The indignation of the duchess was for some time too great for words—to be taunted by *him* who had plunged her into guilt and shame, who had steeped her nightly pillow, to which sleep was now a stranger, in tears, was not to be borne. “Begone,” said she, when words found utterance; “never again presume to appear before me. I loathe myself for having stooped to love one so heartless, so worthless; and my turpitude is increased tenfold in my own eyes, by the discovery that you have no one quality to extenuate my crime.”

Angered beyond the power of gentlemanly forbearance, Lord Willamere arose to depart. “Remember,” said he spitefully, “that when your ill-humour has ceased, you may find that I am not to be recalled,” and he left the room.

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Great was the regret next day, when the sudden death of the young and beautiful

Duchess of Roschampton was announced. Her grace had complained of indisposition when she went to dress for dinner; grew worse, and found herself unable to leave her chamber. She refused to permit a physician to be sent for, and was found a corse next morning when her *femme de chambre* entered her room. An empty bottle, marked "Laudanum," discovered by her bed-side, revealed the cause of her death. She had of late become compelled to have recourse to it to procure sleep, and, urged to desperation, had in a moment of phrenzy swallowed its contents.

Her husband mourned her long and deeply; and, ignorant of her sin and its results, believed that the over-dose which produced her death had been taken through mistake. Young, beautiful, blessed with rank, wealth, and so fondly beloved by him, he could not imagine a cause for her committing suicide. No, she must have taken the deadly potion without being aware of its strength, and he must ever regret her loss. There were, however, some who but too well guessed the truth. One was

the *femme de chambre*, who saw her, pale as marble, and deluged in tears, enter with unsteady steps her dressing-room, a few minutes after Lord Willamere had left the house. *She* marked the look of utter despair which revealed what was passing in the broken heart of her mistress, when the duchess desired to be left alone that fatal night; and so impressed was she by a dread of some impending catastrophe, that, had the duke been at home, she would have confessed her fears that it was not safe to have the duchess left alone. Unfortunately, the duke was at the House of Lords, and returned not until all was over. Although the suspicion that a guilty attachment existed between their lady and Lord Willamere had long been excited in the minds of the servants, such was the good-will her gentleness and goodness had created in their breasts, and so strong was the respect they entertained for the duke, that no whisper ever betrayed the secret. The *femme de chambre*, who had for some time marked the unhappiness of the duchess, and surmised the cause, would have died sooner than breathe a

word that could darken her fame, or lead the betrayed and bereaved husband to suspect, that the wife whose sudden death he so deeply deplored, had been unworthy of his affection. It was remarked that whenever by chance Lord Willamere's name was mentioned in her presence, she would turn deadly pale, and a shudder would pass over her frame ; but when questioned why this occurred, she would give some excuse, and change the subject. The sudden death of the duchess greatly shocked Lord Willamere. He had anticipated no such tragical catastrophe, and for some time it affected his spirits, and he blamed himself for his unkindness at their last interview. But after a few months she was thought of no more, save when a street organ happened to play her favourite air, and then he would turn pale and sigh. The tune, however, like all other ones, became old-fashioned, and ceased to be played by the organs, so he was released from this last reminder of her whose peace he had destroyed, and whom he had driven to self-destruction.

## CHAPTER XII.

WE left Sir Henry Riverstock following the carriage that contained Mr. and Mrs. Stratford. He had the tact and decency not to come so near it as to be seen by its occupants; and as he observed it stop in front of the garden-gate of a small but neat cottage, into which the invalid was assisted by his wife and a female servant, he stopped his horse until they had time to pass into the house, and then, having noted the locality, he retraced his route to the Park. The intelligence of the supposed frailty of the fair object of his pursuit, conveyed by Mr. Addington, only served to encourage the evil designs excited by her beauty in the mind of the libertine baronet. Why might not *he* seek to please, and win her smiles, as well as Lord Willamere had done? Was *he* not as

good-looking, much younger, and richer than his lordship? and why therefore not aspire to the same success? So reasoned Sir Henry Riverstock, as he slowly rode back to the park, his thoughts occupied by the lovely woman he had seen, and bent on leaving no effort untried to gain her favour. This incipient passion did not, however, deter him from examining every pretty woman he saw in the Park, as if each not personally known to him were an attainable object; or in fact, as if the women were, like horses exposed in a dealer's yard, led forth to be exhibited to the highest bidder.

“*She* is handsomer, a thousand times handsomer than any of them,” said he to himself. “What a lucky fellow Willamere was to have won her, and in the meridian of her beauty too, before she had become so pale and delicate as at present. But this paleness and delicacy will subside when she comes to be no longer constantly immured with that sickly husband of hers. The being shut up with such an unhealthy fellow is enough to make any woman look ill. It is like renewing the old story of

Mezentius, chaining the living to the dead, to have such fine a creature tied to that poor faded shrunken skeleton, who has scarcely a breath of life left in his body. I'll write to her at once. Or, let me see, shall I wait a little? Her husband can't last long, and women's hearts are said to be peculiarly softened during the first days of widowhood."

Thus reflected the sensual and libertine Sir Henry Riverstock, to whom a doubt of the truth of the statement of Mr. Addington never occurred. Indeed, he seldom questioned any scandalous story, for, judging of the mass of mankind by self, he was prone to give credence to every evil that could be imputed to it.

It is long since we left Mr. and Mrs. Stratford entering the abode near Brompton, provided for them by their kind and considerate friend, Mr. Manvers. In it they found every comfort that an invalid could require, and both husband and wife, as they looked around on the neat and cheerful rooms, and into the garden, gay with flowers, and enlivened by the carols

of innumerable birds, mentally blessed him to whom they owed so much.

“The pure air and quiet of this sweet place, will, with the blessing of God, restore you,” said the doting wife, as she looked fondly and anxiously at the pale face and sunken eyes of her husband.

He shook his head sorrowfully, but spoke not, and turned away to hide his emotion. Oh! what a pang shot through his wife’s heart at that moment, as his conviction of the utter hopelessness of his case was revealed to her by his silence, and the emotion he tried to conceal. She struggled to master her feelings and assume a calm demeanour, while her heart was torn by grief and dread; but a tremulous movement of her lips, and an increased paleness of her face, betrayed what she felt.

Day after day, did she examine with the watchful eyes of love, the altered aspect of her husband. The pure air and quiet, on which she had so much counted for effecting a beneficial change in his state, had failed to produce the desired end, and each hour saw him become

more deathly pallid, more emaciated, and more languid than before; while a cough that shook his feeble frame, but too well proclaimed that consumption, that most terrible of maladies, was making rapid strides in its destructive progress to end his life. He would lay for hours dozing on a sofa in the chamber, so death-like, that his labouring breath alone proved he was still a denizen of earth, and his wife would fix her eyes on that pale brow, and those sharply chiselled features which the finger of approaching Death had already touched, as if to imprint them on her memory, while tears, bitter, burning tears, would chase each other down her cheeks.

Often would the pallid sleeper murmur her name in a tone of such deep tenderness, as to thrill through her heart, while heavy sighs heaved his breast, and proved that even in slumber, he was haunted by the thought of their coming separation. At such moments she would look from the sleeping father to his slumbering child. The one with the pallor of death on his brow, marking how fleetly the

sands of life were ebbing, and the other rosy, plump, and dimpled, smiling in its dreams, unconscious of the state of the authors of its being, and of the fate impending over them.

“ Could I but preserve him, even thus,” Mrs. Stratford would say, as she gazed on her husband, “ I would be content. To watch over him as now ; to guard his slumbers from interruption ; to minister to his wants ;—oh ! it would be happiness ! But to know that the dear face I am now looking on will soon be hidden from my eyes for ever, that, shut from the light of day in the dark and narrow grave, the worms will prey on it, and decay deface those fair lineaments,—O God ! O God ! the bitterness of death is in such thoughts, and reason staggers beneath a load of anguish too heavy to be borne. Would to heaven that our helpless child and I were summoned to accompany my husband to the grave ! Pardon me, O merciful Father, if weak and sinful, I shrink from the cup of bitterness *thou* hast willed I should drink to the very dregs. Have mercy on me, and take me and the child that thou hast

given me hence, for I have not courage to live after the grave shall have closed over my husband."

How mournful and tender were the communings of the dying husband and doting wife, during the days that intervened between their earthly separation. How did he, full of faith in the divine mercy of his heavenly Father, endeavour to reconcile her to the inevitable blow that would leave her a lonely mourner on earth, and a dependant on the kindness of Mr. Manvers. But though the pious resignation of the Christian was exerted to chasten the grief of the fond husband and father, it could not always subdue the anguish with which he contemplated a separation from those so dear to him. He would, when he believed himself unobserved, gaze on his wife and child until tears blinded him, and he would turn his face away to conceal his emotion, lest it might inflict a fresh pang on the tender nurse who seldom left his pillow.

One day, when the weather was more than usually sultry, and that its enervating effect

made itself felt by an increased languor and exhaustion of his debilitated frame, his wife, while using a fan to cool his fevered brow, said she longed for the fresh breezes of autumn to bring restored health to him.

“Alas! dearest, health will never more visit me,” replied he. “Cheat not yourself, my Emily, with illusive hopes. I shall leave you before the first autumnal breeze sweeps the leaves from those trees we both daily look on.”

“Say not, oh! say not so, William,” and the speaker arose and pressed him in her arms, as if to preserve him from the grasp of the destroyer Death, while a torrent of tears bathed her cheeks. “You will yet recover. The Almighty will take pity on me, and knowing my weakness will not try me beyond my strength of endurance. Oh! William, I could not part from you, I could not see you die!” and the frame of the wretched wife shook in agony. Never previously had she dared to contemplate the terrible result of the malady that she saw day by day making such fearful inroads on the life of her husband. That he was in danger,

in imminent danger, she could not conceal from herself, though, with the delusion peculiar to love in such cases, she refused to believe the possibility of the calamity which menaced her. It was too dreadful to be supported even in thought; and if for a moment it suggested itself, her terrified imagination shrunk from it, and, with a shudder, she would say, "Oh! no; God is too good. *He*, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and the weakness of his poor sinful children, knows that such a blow would indeed overwhelm me, and leave my poor child doubly an orphan."

But now to hear from his own lips a confirmation of fears too terrible to be admitted, even in thought, struck her to the heart, and sounded a funeral knell to departed hope. No longer could she cheat herself, or shut her eyes to the dreadful truth; and with this conviction came a stunning sense of despair and desolation, that almost deprived her of the power to quell the demonstrations of her agony, which she felt must inflict such pain on her husband.

"I feared this, my poor Emily," said he,

“and have long wished, but had not courage, to prepare you for what is inevitable. Remember that we part not for ever, that life soon passes, that you will follow me, and that we shall, through the mercy of our blessed Redeemer, be hereafter reunited where no more partings are.”

How eagerly did her ears drink in the sounds of that dear voice, soon to be hushed in the silence of death! Was it indeed possible that his days were numbered? that soon the dark grave would hide from her view that dear face, now beaming on her with unutterable love? She could not speak. Every attempt to pronounce even a single word brought on a sense of suffocation that threatened to overpower her. So, mute and motionless, save by the quick rising of her agitated breast, she remained plunged in grief.

Oh! how overwhelming is the first conviction that the object dearest to us on earth is about to be snatched from us for ever! How do we gaze on those features that must soon be shut out from our sight, how listen to those accents that never uttered an unkind word, and which

will soon meet our ears no more! The deep emotion of her husband had so exhausted his weak frame that he sank into a gentle sleep, during which his unhappy wife found a momentary relief in tears. They flowed long and silently. She suffered no sob to escape from her oppressed heart, nor did her tearful eyes turn from the pale and attenuated face before her; which, save for the motion produced by his quick respiration, might have been mistaken for that of the dead. The door of the chamber opened, and the female servant who waited on Mrs. Stratford entered with a letter addressed to her. "It was brought by a groom, ma'am," whispered she, "who said he would call tomorrow for an answer." Having made a sign to her not to disturb the sleeper, Mrs. Stratford put the letter into her pocket without bestowing a thought on whom it might come from, nor did it occur to her memory again until the next day, when the maid came to inform her that the servant who had brought the letter the previous day, had called, and was waiting for an answer.

“What letter, dearest?” asked her husband.

“I had totally forgotten it,” replied his wife, drawing it from her pocket with its seal unbroken.

“I thought we had been forgotten by all, except our kind friend, Mr. Manvers,” observed Mr. Stratford, as he looked at his wife, who opened the letter with an indifference and carelessness that betokened how little interest it occasioned; but soon her aspect changed—her pale cheek became crimsoned, her eyes darted glances of anger and indignation, and in a voice tremulous with emotion, she told the servant that there was no answer.

“Something in that letter has moved, has agitated you, Emily. Is it as I suspect? Has that unprincipled man, Lord Willamere, whom I saw in Piccadilly the day we were coming here, discovered our abode, and again renewed his insults?”

The face of the speaker, previously pale as death, was now flushed by indignation, and his hand trembled as he held it forth for the letter.

“It is not from that bad man, my dear William, I assure you it is not.”

"Then why did its perusal agitate and distress you, my own Emily?"

"The least thing agitates me of late," replied Mrs. Stratford, endeavouring to assume a careless air, though trembling lest her husband should insist upon seeing the letter, which would, she was well aware, excite emotions most injurious in his weak state.

"Let me read it, Emily!" and he held out his hand eagerly for the letter.

"Do not read it, dear William. Oblige me by not insisting on it."

"We have too short a time to be together, my poor love, for me to forego one of the dear privileges you accorded me when you blessed me with your hand, that of having no secrets between us."

"But this odious letter will only vex you. I know not its vile writer, and why should we bestow a single thought on him or it?"

"I will see it, Emily!" and the sick man, with an impatience very unusual in him, and which was probably the effect of the fever preying on his exhausted frame, motioned to

have the letter given to him. Fearing that a continued opposition to his wishes might be as injurious as a perusal of the hated epistle, his wife resigned it to his trembling hand, her own as tremulous; but scarcely had his eyes glanced over the first few lines, ere his face became suffused with the red blush of wounded pride and indignation, even to his very temples, and he sunk back exhausted, and gasping for breath, on his pillow. A violent paroxysm of coughing rapidly ensued, which terribly shook his frame, and was followed by an ensanguined stream, which gushed from his mouth, threatening immediate death by suffocation. The cries of his distracted wife brought a servant to her aid. A messenger was dispatched for the next medical man, who was soon in attendance, and who tried, but, alas! in vain, to stay the ebbing tide of life, for ere an hour had elapsed, he had ceased to breathe. No tears, no groan, marked the bereaved wife's sense of the calamity that had befallen her. Pale, and motionless as a statue, with her eyes fixed on the face of the departed, and his lifeless hand still clasped con-

vulsively in hers, she seemed unconscious that he was indeed gone for ever, and heedless of the reiterated requests of the doctor and the servant, that she should retire to another room. But when with a gentle force they endeavoured to remove her from the spot, she resisted their efforts with an unnatural strength for so slight a frame, and breaking from their arms, she threw herself on the body of her husband, and clasping it wildly to her breast, fell into strong convulsions. Though accustomed to such trying scenes of grief, the overwhelming agony he here witnessed made a deep impression on Mr. Dawkins, the surgeon, and he used every effort that his skill and experience could suggest, to afford relief to his patient. But the fiat had gone forth, and human skill was vain. At the expiration of three days she ceased to suffer, and her pure and spotless soul fled to join that of the husband she had so fondly, truly loved, leaving their helpless child as a mournful legacy to the pity of Mr. Manvers, the only sincere friend its unhappy parents had ever known. He was faithful to

the trust, and having attended their cold remains to a neighbouring cemetery with every observance of respect, and seen them interred in one grave, he took the orphan to his house, where, provided with all comfort, she was tended with as much care as if she had been his own child. When old enough to receive tuition she was sent to an excellent school, it being the intention of her benefactor that she should be brought up as a governess.

To render her fit for this situation, no expense was saved, and during the years that intervened ere she was deemed sufficiently accomplished to instruct others, she continued to have every kindness lavished on her by her generous friend and his family. When arrived at an age to comprehend her position, (I trust my readers will permit me to avoid the egotistical *I*, and write of myself as if I wrote of another,) Mr. Manvers revealed to her the particulars of the sad story, and premature deaths of her parents. He painted in bright and unfading colours, the virtues and misfortunes of the amiable and ill-fated pair. He

loved to dwell on every detail connected with them, that brought forth more strikingly their virtues and noble qualities; and while doing so, the history of their wrongs, all of which were well known to him, was exposed to her. The heartlessness, and utter selfishness of those among whom the destiny of her father had been cast, filled her mind with disgust and dread, but it also strengthened and steeled it against the illusions to which youth is prone.

At an age when young girls see only the bright side of life, she was impressed with a conviction that the heirs of poverty are born to endure many and heavy trials; and that fortitude and resignation, which can alone enable them to support such evils, must be assiduously cultivated, as a spirit of discontent and repining will but increase the sense of them.

The same fatal disease that had snatched away the wife of Mr. Manvers, deprived him of his children, when they had become old enough to be his friends, as well as companions. It was on these trying occasions that the orphan he had protected was enabled to

prove most strongly her gratitude and devotion. She nursed the sick with unwearying attention and tenderness, and soothed the bereaved father when his offspring were taken from him, with an assiduity which, if it could not heal the deep wounds inflicted on his peace, served at least to mitigate his sense of their anguish.

Fortune, that blind goddess, who seems to delight in persecuting those least able to resist her shafts, and who had so sternly frowned on her parents, had reserved some of her arrows to pierce the orphan they had left behind, and that too when her only friend, the worthy Mr. Manvers, was on the point of securing to her a provision, that would have precluded her from ever experiencing the ills that wait on poverty. Having amassed a large fortune, and no longer blessed with those dear objects for whom he had laboured to acquire it, he determined on bequeathing it to her whom he had befriended. His only near relative was a sister, whose character and conduct were so dissimilar to his own, as to have produced a long and serious estrangement between them. Her extrava-

gance had often involved her in difficulties, from the consequences of which he had several times extricated her, at the cost of heavy pecuniary sacrifices, but his kindness had failed to make a proper impression on her callous heart. He had discovered her ingratitude, and although determined to make a provision that would secure her from want when he should be no more, he, in the warmth of his generous affection, thought his wealth could nowhere be so well bestowed as on the young girl whose attention to his lost offspring, and devotion to himself, had won his regard. He had immediately after the death of her parents added a codicil to his will, bequeathing the sum of two thousand pounds to her. He now determined to destroy this will, and to replace it by another; but the very day he had consigned it to the flames, and gone to his solicitor to give him instructions to prepare another, he found that gentleman had been called into the country, and was not expected to return for some days. "Let me know when he arrives," said Mr. Manvers to the clerk, "for I have business of

some importance to consult him on," and he walked away from Lincoln's Inn, his mind filled by the thought of securing his large fortune to the person he most regarded. That evening he made notes of instruction for the drawing of his will, in which an annuity of two hundred a year was to be bequeathed to his sister; half that sum to his worthy housekeeper, a considerable provision to his confidential clerk, and donations to all his other clerks and domestics whose services had entitled them to his esteem. To the orphan was the remainder of his wealth, amounting to no less a sum than sixty thousand pounds, to revert, and he named two of his most respected friends as executors. He signed the sheet of paper on which he had written these notes, and having placed it on his desk, intending to lock it up next morning, retired to his pillow that night with a mind at rest, satisfied at having taken steps to put into execution an intention formed ever since the death of his second daughter. With more virtues than fall to the lot of most men, Mr. Manvers had one defect, that was a superstitious

dread connected with making his will. He thought that death was less likely to visit him while he had made no testamentary arrangement of his affairs ; and this weakness, which he hardly acknowledged to himself, had led him from month to month to postpone making a new one. To conquer this disposition to procrastination, of the weakness of which he felt sensible, he had taken the step of committing the will made during the life of his daughter to the flames, and the very next day had gone to his solicitor's to have a new one drawn up in due form. But the truth of the proverb, that "Man proposes, and God disposes," was never more exemplified than in his case ; for he never awoke from the sleep into which he fell the night after he had written his notes relative to his will ; that calm slumber, before dropping into which, his last thought had been one of self-satisfaction at having, as he thought, so well disposed of his honestly acquired wealth.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE next morning, about the hour which Mr. Manvers generally left his chamber, his sister called to seek an interview with him, for the purpose of soliciting pecuniary aid ; having, as was her wont, exceeded the quarterly stipend he assigned for her support. She was informed that he had not yet descended, and was shown into a private room at the back of his shop, where he was in the habit of receiving people on business. She had not remained more than a quarter of an hour there, when the shrieks of the housemaid, who rushed down stairs, struck her ear, and hearing the shocked and grief-stricken woman announce to the housekeeper that their dear, their good master was no more, she hurried up to his chamber, and found her.

brother a corse ! She glanced around ; for even the awful sight before her failed to touch her cold and callous heart ; and her eyes fell on the paper on the desk near his bedside. In a moment she became conscious of its importance, and seizing it with the rapidity of lightning, she conveyed it to her pocket before the house-keeper and confidential clerk of the deceased could reach the chamber ; and then throwing herself on the bed, and clasping the lifeless body in her arms, she so well simulated a paroxysm of despair and anguish, as to excite the commiseration of those present, although they had previously felt ill-disposed towards her, from knowing the chagrin and trouble she had so frequently inflicted on their departed friend and master. A surgeon who had been sent for on the first alarm, now arrived, and pronounced that life had been for several hours extinct. Mr. Vernon, the head clerk, in the presence of the surgeon, placed seals on all the desks, drawers, &c., and despatched messengers to the two friends whom his late employer had told him were to be his executors.

Mr. Manvers had informed him some time previously, of his intention to bequeath the principal portion of his fortune to the orphan. The worthy housekeeper had likewise been told this by her master, so both now regarded the young girl as the heiress to his wealth; and, having known and loved her since her infancy, they had a satisfaction in her good fortune.

Mrs. Forsythe, the sister of the deceased, so well enacted her role, as to impose on all present, and convince them that she was a prey to grief. Force was necessary to remove her from the lifeless body of her brother, and so wholly overwhelmed by grief did she appear to be, that the humane and worthy housekeeper proposed having a bed made for her in an adjoining chamber, she having declared, with a frantic vehemence of tenderness, that she would not be denied the sad consolation of remaining near his corse until it was to be removed for ever from her sight.

Having carried her point of remaining on the spot, and watching that nothing was removed,—for Mrs. Forsythe to her other bad qualities

united a degree of suspicion rarely found but in those who, capable themselves of every turpitude, are prone to attribute similar dispositions to all with whom they come in contact, she swallowed a calming potion, prescribed by the surgeon, and being left alone to try the efficacy of its effect, drew the paper signed by her late brother from its concealment, and carefully perused its contents. The writing and paper looked so fresh, and the circumstance, too, of its laying *on* the desk, with the pen still in the inkbottle by its side, struck her as proofs that the document in her hand had only been indited the previous night, before her brother had sought that pillow whence it was decreed by the Almighty that he was to rise no more. She trembled with emotion as the possibility that this might be his only testamentary disposition occurred to her; and a thrill of joy and triumph passed through her mind at the thought that it was secure in her possession, and unknown to any one else. Oh, if it should prove to be so! If no other will could be found among his papers, or at his.

solicitor's, how might she benefit by having discovered and secreted it! How fortunate was it that she had been urged by want to visit the deceased that morning; that she was on the spot at the identical time; had been the first to enter his chamber, or at least that side of it where his writing-desk stood, and had time to hide the important paper. Yes, if no will could be found, she—she, the sister he disliked, the object of his charity, who had come that very morning to crave a further extension of it, ashamed to meet his cold glance and reproachful eye at this new proof of her improvidence! Yes, she would, in default of a will being found, become the natural heiress to all his wealth, and his *protégée*, Miss Stratford, for whom he intended to defraud her, his nearest relation, his own sister, would be left a dependent on the bounty of *her* whom probably she had been taught to undervalue, if not to despise! Oh! there was happiness in the very thought of attaining the wealth her heart had long pined for, and of which she had so often envied her brother the possession! *She* would

not, like him, toil on to increase the ample store he had amassed. No, she would make it minister to those gratifications of which she had but too long been deprived; she would revel in those luxuries and pleasures she longed to enjoy; and the wealth, for the attainment of which he had so strictly attended to business for years, and denied himself so many indulgences, she, yes, she whom he had reprehended, and to whom he had doled out a stinted stipend, would reap the benefit of all his parsimony and industry. And the heartless woman smiled in triumphant anticipation of those riches she hoped to enjoy.

But if a former will had not been destroyed! Ah! there was the rub; and she trembled as the possibility of this again crossed her mind. She determined that she would continue to enact the *rôle* of a mourning sister, so successfully commenced, excite the good-will and sympathy of those around her, who entertained so deep a respect for her departed brother; so that in case her worst fears were realized by the existence of a will, she might, by conci-

liating the good opinion of the legatee, or legatees, derive some pecuniary advantage from them. She controlled herself sufficiently to appear wholly absorbed in grief, and so well did she play her part, that she succeeded in duping the worthy individuals who had an opportunity of witnessing her assumed chagrin.

The result is soon told. No will could be found. Selina Stratford was left without any provision; and Mrs. Forsythe, the cold, calculating, and selfish Mrs. Forsythe, became the inheritress of the large fortune of her brother.

No sooner was it ascertained that Mrs. Forsythe was indeed the legal inheritress of her brother's fortune, than she threw off the mask of grief she had previously assumed, and boldly asserted her rights. She demanded an exact account of the possessions that had devolved on her, left no drawer or desk unsearched, no closet unexplored; examined every room, and every piece of furniture in each, and found with delight that the wealth, which was now her own, far exceeded her most sanguine expectations. She looked with a suspicion, which she

had not the delicacy to conceal, on the head clerk, a man of the strictest probity, repeatedly told him he must render an exact account of his late master's affairs, and insulted the old housekeeper, the tried and faithful servant in whom Mr. Manvers had placed implicit confidence, by finding fault with the household arrangements, and declaring her intention of changing the whole system.

The orphan had been summoned from the establishment in Sloane-street, where she had, during the last twelve years, resided as a parlour boarder, to come and visit the cold remains of her friend and benefactor, and had arrived at his abode soon after the melancholy intelligence of his death had reached her. Looked on by the head clerk and housekeeper as the person who was to inherit their late master's fortune, they were anxious that she should remain in the house, and received her with every demonstration of respect. They knew that her grief was heartfelt, and deeply sympathized in it. Mrs. Forsythe treated her with a fawning attention during the first two or

three days, calculating that, should a will be found, and that the orphan was to be the heiress of her brother, it would be politic to conciliate her good will, in the hope that it might lead to an addition to whatever provision Mr. Manvers might have assigned for her. That it would be a small one, she entertained no doubt; and, consequently, she was desirous of profiting by any chance that offered to increase it. Her flattery was so fulsome and unacceptable to the orphan, that it required a lively recollection of the benefits received from Mr. Manvers, and a warm sense of gratitude for them, to make her tolerate his sister, whose manners and tone were so dissimilar to her own, as to render her society anything but agreeable to her. When, however, the fact of Mrs. Forsythe being the heiress to her brother's possessions was made known, that person soon changed her manner towards the *protégée* of her brother; her fulsome adulation was turned to an insolent *brusquerie* still more insupportable, and she reminded the poor girl of her dependent position, with a coarseness so absolutely revolting, that Selina

left the house where she had never previously experienced aught save kindness and affection, evinced with a delicacy that enhanced the value of both.

She returned to the establishment in Sloane-street, where she had resided as a parlour boarder, determined to solicit the assistance of the Mesdames Patterson to procure her a situation as governess. The change in her position had already been made known to them, for Mrs. Forsythe, with a malice and littleness of mind peculiar to her, had written them a letter, stating that the girl whom her brother had foolishly brought up, and educated as if she were a lady, was now left a beggar; and that *she*, being sole possessor of his wealth, must decline making so bad a use of it, as to allow any portion to be wasted in paying any arrears due to them. It happened unfortunately that a quarter's salary had fallen due two days after the death of Mr. Manvers, and as the sum was no less a one than fifty pounds, that generous man having, to ensure the comfort of his ward, agreed to pay the liberal allowance of

two hundred per annum for her board and lodging, the intelligence conveyed by his sister occasioned no very agreeable surprise in the establishment in Sloane-street.

The Mesdames Patterson were elderly maiden ladies, who, after having struggled during the commencement of their career as teachers through many and heavy pecuniary difficulties, found themselves, after twenty years employed in tuition, in a state of comparative affluence, less the fruit of their industry than the consequence of the rigid system of economy in which they had persevered. They demanded large remuneration from their pupils, and fed them so frugally, that the children consigned to the tender mercies of a poor-house were not more sparingly dieted than the young ladies in their establishment. The difference was, the first were served on delf, pewter, or tin, on huckaback; the second on delicate china or plate, on snowy damask. All breakage by the servants was charged in the quarterly accounts to the young ladies, and though the parents might murmur at the extravagance of such charges,

the Mesdames Patterson would not abate one shilling of them, saying, that in their establishment they permitted nothing but the very best china and glass to be used, and the breakage must be paid for.

The sum thus mulcted, amounted to no inconsiderable one at the close of each year, and the young ladies of the Misses Patterson's establishment were compelled to console themselves for the damaged, bohea tea, bought at half-price, the adulterated cocoa and chocolate, the coarse sugar, rancid butter, pale-blue milk, and stale household bread, supplied for their morning and evening repasts, by the *recherché* elegance of the damask, china, plate, and glass, on which they were served. The paucity of the dinners, and bad quality of the low-priced viands, the Misses Patterson thought were amply atoned for by the irreproachable elegance of the dinner service. And even this elegance became a source of profit instead of cost to the establishment, for each young lady was expected to bring a silver teapot, cream-ewer, and sugar-basin, half-a-dozen silver forks, and spoons, with

a silver dish, which, on their leaving the school, were to become the property of the Mesdames Patterson. Thus these ladies, at the expiration of a few years, found themselves the owners of an extensive assortment of plate, which went on accumulating every year, the charges for keeping which in repair were regularly entered in the accounts of the pupils.

It was a subject of general remark and commendation, that the young ladies of the Misses Patterson's establishment had clearer complexions, and slighter waists, than those of any other; and were much less frequently attacked by inflammatory complaints. With such advantages, what parent could listen to the representations of her daughter, on the paucity or quality of her food? even if young ladies were prone to make such. But that those confided to the Mesdames Patterson were not so disposed, will not surprise our readers, when we add, that few young ladies were received by them until they had entered their thirteenth year (*theirs* being what is termed a finishing school); a period of life at which *les demoiselles* begin to be extremely

sensible of the advantages of a clear complexion and slight waist, and are willing to submit to a spare diet to secure them. To orphans, rich enough to pay the large remuneration required, the maiden sisters, when their education was finished, offered a home, as parlour boarders; and among these, Selina Stratford had been placed. She now returned, believing (so ignorant was she of the world) that she should receive kindness and commiseration, under her present affliction, from the Misses Patterson. Her reception was a very different one to that on which she counted. They listened to her with unmoved countenances, although her words were often interrupted by tears, and when she had concluded, told her that a letter from Mrs. Forsythe had made them perfectly aware of her position.

“When we received you into this house,” said the senior of the Misses Patterson, “we were wholly ignorant that you were a dependent on the charity of a grocer. We demurred about receiving a pupil placed by a person in that station of life, having always made it a rule to accept only young ladies of good family.

Indeed, we carefully concealed from our other pupils, and their parents, that *the* Mr. Manvers who placed you here, and paid your bills, was no other than the tradesman who probably served them with all the articles in his trade. But to find ourselves taken in, defrauded, as it were, out of our just claims—you are aware, Miss Stratford, that one quarter's salary became due a week ago, and that another quarter has commenced, and also that the rules of our house are, that a quarter's notice of leaving should be given, or the salary paid in advance—is really too bad. It was shameful of Mr. Manvers not to have made arrangements that *we* should be paid, when we had departed so far from our established rules as to receive a young person who had no other recommendation to our notice than his. Yes, it was most dishonorable, I must say."

Selina Stratford, confounded and indignant at hearing such reproaches uttered against her benefactor, whose name had never previously been pronounced by the Mesdames Patterson unaccompanied by praises of his generosity, liberality, and punctuality, stood amazed and

silent. Frequent had been the presents, graciously offered, and thankfully accepted, from Mr. Manvers to the Misses Patterson, of cases of superior tea, Greek honey, dried fruits, and sweetmeats, with other dainties peculiar to his craft, given to induce these starch and somewhat haughty dames to show favour and kindness to his *protégée*. Nor were these *cadeaux* unavailing; for these ladies had often declared, that from none of the friends or parents of their pupils had they received such constant and useful gifts, as from the guardian of Miss Stratford; and their smiles and indulgence to her having been meted out in proportion, she had, with the confidence of youth and inexperience, fully calculated that now, in her hour of need, they would not desert her. She counted on being received by them until they could hear of a situation for her as governess, in which their recommendation could place her. Their harsh words and altered mien convinced her that she had been greatly in error when she built her hopes on so unstable a foundation as their good-will; and as this conviction forced

itself on her mind tears filled her eyes—less the result of selfish regret at the probable consequences to herself, than at discovering the unworthiness of those of whom she had hitherto entertained a favourable opinion. The first lessons in the school of adversity are ever acquired with pain, and this pain is always in proportion to the native goodness of the scholar. Selina Stratford felt how differently *she* would have acted in similar circumstances, and this consciousness of a better nature rendered her regret more acute, her indignation more lively.

“Brought up in the principles of probity that govern this house, you cannot, surely, help feeling, Miss Stratford, that *we* ought not to be losers by our misplaced confidence in Mr. Manvers,” resumed the elder Miss Patterson. “He was liberal in his allowance of pocket money to you ; indeed more so than was right, considering your dependent position, and his shameful neglect in not providing for you. He made you presents, too, of considerable value, and you cannot, surely, have idly expended the money you received ?”

"I have still some by me, madam," replied Selina.

"Then you will have but little profited by the instruction received beneath this roof, if you can hesitate a moment in appropriating every shilling you possess towards paying, as far as it will go, for the quarter due to us by your late friend. Your watch, trinkets, best clothes, India shawl, and books, will help to defray our account, and, although we shall still be heavy losers, we cannot blame you, provided you give up, as you are in common honesty bound to do, all that you possess."

"Yes, this will be only fair; and my sister and I show our kindness and forbearance to you, in pointing out how you may clear yourself from debt," observed the junior Miss Patterson, assuming a bland air.

"I accede, at once, to your proposal, madam," replied Selina, "and hope that, in return for my willingness to give up all I possess, you will kindly use your influence to procure me a situation as governess—my sole chance of subsistence, henceforth."

“Certainly, if we should hear of any person wanting a governess, we will think of you, but I fear it will not be very likely.

“People begin to find out that private education, carried on beneath the parental roof, is attended with so many disadvantages, that they prefer sending their children to establishments like ours. A teacher at a school will be the object to which your wishes must point, as being the one most attainable; but bear in mind, the salaries given are so small, that it will require the utmost prudence and economy on your part, to enable you to clothe yourself with the respectability expected in such establishments.”

“Might I be permitted to remain here until some such situation offers?” inquired Selina, her cheeks suffused with red, at being compelled to make this first appeal to the charity of her fellow-creatures.

The sisters looked at each other, and then, after a moment's pause, the elder replied, that provided Miss Stratford would fulfil the duties of a teacher, in return for her board and

lodging, they would not object to her remaining until something offered for her.

“ But,” added Miss Patterson, “ you must be aware that your position here necessarily becomes wholly altered. You must leave the chamber you have hitherto occupied, and share the room and bed of Miss Waterhouse. You must be unremitting in your exertions to perform your duty, and merit our approval, in return for the heavy expense we entail on ourselves in allowing you to remain here.”

“ Yes,” said the junior Miss Patterson, “ your board and lodging will be a serious expense; but our humanity and good-nature induce us to sacrifice our own interest for sake of advancing yours, and I trust you will know how to estimate the favour. You can devote your leisure hours in the evening to mending the house linen, and doing any little plain work my sister or I may have occasion for. By the bye, I have just now some under-petticoats to be made, which I will have sent to you. Miss Waterhouse is a steady industrious girl, who never spares her labour, is ready to turn a hand to any thing,

and never gives trouble to the servants. You will do well to follow her example in all things, and, above all, in the humility for which she is so conspicuous."

Selina listened in silence to the sisters, confounded by a sense of her own dependent position. She knew not what to do,—had no friend to turn to for counsel or protection,—and although she was aware that to accept the offer made by the Mesdames Patterson would be to expose herself to the labour, without the wages of a servant, she thought that even this would be better, than to go forth alone and unprotected to seek a home and employment to support her in it. She thanked the sisters, and said that for the present she would avail herself of their offer.

## CHAPTER XIV.

“IT is advisable that no time should be lost in transferring the money and articles which we are to have in part payment of the sum due to us,” observed Miss Patterson, after a short pause and a whispering consultation with her sister. “Mind, I say in part payment ; for of course all you possess would go but a very short way indeed towards discharging your debt ; and I fully expect that when you get a situation, with a salary attached to it, you will appropriate three parts of it to discharging in full the amount due to us.”

“That will be only fair,” said the junior sister, “and Miss Stratford cannot object to it.”

Miss Patterson accompanied Selina to her chamber, and stood peering into each drawer

as it was opened. "Let me have the money first!" exclaimed she, reaching eagerly at the note-case and purse which were in a corner of the desk, and clutching them in her grasp. "Are you sure that you have no more elsewhere?—None in your pocket?"

"Only a few shillings, madam," replied Selina.

"Let me see."

The orphan drew a purse from her pocket, and its contents, amounting to some fifteen or sixteen shillings, were counted over by Miss Patterson, who, having ascertained the precise sum, was about to replace it in the purse again, and to transfer it to her own pocket, when Selina ventured to say, "Pardon me, but I should not like to part with that purse. It was the gift of my kind friend, Mr. Manvers."

"Oh! you may keep it, if you set such a store by it," and Miss Patterson threw, rather than handed back the empty purse; "but your kind friend, as you are pleased to call him, would have done better in leaving you something to keep you in bread hereafter, than in

foolishly supplying you with more pocket-money than you wanted; which has induced a habit of extravagance greatly to be deplored in a person in your dependent situation."

"You will oblige me, Madam, by sparing all reflections on the memory of my best friend," said Selina, and tears filled her eyes.

"You must conquer this irritability, if you intend to thrive in this or any other establishment you may enter," observed Miss Patterson. "It will be a great obstacle to you through life, I can assure you. Let me see how much gold there is in that other purse, and what notes there are in the pocket-book."

She waited not for Selina to count the money, but did so herself; and then, having ascertained that the note-case was empty, she possessed herself of the gold, some seventeen or eighteen sovereigns, and then turned her attention to the wardrobe.

"You will not require these coloured silk dresses," observed she. "Black, or very dark brown, are the colours most suitable to a governess. I thought your shawl was better,

but I find it is only a low-priced one. You lately bought some new linen and stockings, I have heard; that was a piece of extravagance, but they will suit me," and she counted over the said articles. "Are these all your trinkets? Surely I have seen you wear some others!"

"I assure you, madam, these are all I possess."

"Well, but you need not cry about it, child. Really you must conquer this habit of shedding tears on every occasion. It will never do. Have you not another gold chain, a smaller one?"

"Yes, madam, one I always wear; which has a locket attached, with the hair of my parents."

"A black ribbon will answer quite as well, and be more suitable to your altered circumstances; so give me the chain."

With unsteady fingers Selina drew the chain from her neck; and, having unfastened it from the locket, consigned it to the hands of Miss Patterson, who then shamelessly reminded her that she had not taken off a ring.

"No! that ring I cannot, will not, part

from!" exclaimed Selina, tortured beyond the power of further endurance: "That was the wedding ring of my mother!"

Her watch, with its chain and seals, was next demanded, and the whole of her property, except two or three of her worst gowns, and a few other indispensable articles, being delivered up to the mean and avaricious woman who so unblushingly seized them, the orphan was left to remove her now scanty wardrobe to the miserable attic she was henceforth to share with the much-enduring Miss Waterhouse.

Nothing could be more cheerless than this wretched chamber; so low that Selina could not stand upright, save in its centre. It was lighted by a small window, precisely in front of which, a stack of chimnies protruded so closely, as nearly to intercept the light, giving the room the air of a prison. Three iron bars, to preclude the possibility of ingress or egress, strengthened the resemblance, which the paucity and quality of the furniture was not calculated to destroy. A deal table, very unsteady on its legs, stood before the window, and a cracked

looking-glass of small dimensions graced it. A wretched looking bed, with a very soiled counterpane and curtains, two rickety chairs, a broken basin and jug, and an empty pomatum-pot, completed the contents of this wretched chamber; and a few of the robes of Miss Waterhouse, suspended on wooden pegs from the wall, added to the dreariness of its aspect.

Never previously had Selina ascended to this portion of the mansion of the Misses Patterson, or imagined that aught so cheerless and poverty-stricken could be found beneath a roof inhabited by persons in easy, if not in affluent circumstances. She shuddered as she contemplated the room, and contrasted it with the clean and cheerful one she had hitherto occupied, and inwardly prayed that she might not long be doomed to be an inmate of this dark and dingy attic. She recoiled with a sentiment of distaste, she could neither vanquish nor wholly conceal, as she looked at the dirty curtains beneath which she was to share the bed of Miss Waterhouse, and felt that she

would infinitely prefer sleeping alone on the boards, to such companionship.

Miss Patterson, observing her emotion, and justly interpreting its cause, said, "You need not be alarmed about the bed. It is a very good one, I assure you. Excellent feathers, and a good straw paillasse under. I never heard the least complaint of it, and Miss Waterhouse has now occupied it for three years, so it is well aired."

Selina made no reply, and Miss Patterson withdrew, leaving her to reflect on her altered position, and all the disagreeable consequences it entailed.

A servant, in a few minutes after, announced to her that an elderly gentleman wished to see her; and handing her a card, she read with satisfaction the name of Mr. Vernon, the senior clerk of her late friend Mr. Manvers. She hastened down stairs to receive him, and forgetful for the moment of her altered position in the establishment of the Mesdames Patterson, was on the point of entering the sitting-room formerly assigned to her use, and where

she had been in the habit of receiving Mr. Manvers, when the servant laid hold of her dress, and said, "Miss, miss, you must not go in there any more. Missus told me not to let you, now as you are hired as a teacher to help Miss Waterhouse."

The blood rushed to the brows of the orphan at this address; but a moment's reflection taught her that there was nothing to be ashamed of in the poverty that exposed her to such annoyances, and with a calm demeanour she inquired of the servant where she could receive Mr. Vernon?

"Here in the hall, Miss, if you please, where Miss Waterhouse sees her friends when they call. The old gentleman is a-waiting outside the door, as I didn't like to let him stop in the hall till I knew whether he really was a friend of yours, there are so many rogues going about with false excuses, and there's always a stray umbrella or so lying about, which they walk off with, if they can lay their hands on nothing else. You see, Miss, there's two or three nice clean chairs here; so the old

gentleman and you can sit down and have a bit of chat ; but hush, Miss," and here the woman bent close to the ear of Selina, "mind you don't speak loud ; for the old 'uns are very 'quisitive, and will be trying to listen to what you say. But mum's the word ; I'd lose my place, if they suspected I put you on your guard."

"Let in the gentleman, if you please," said Selina, and in the next moment Mr. Vernon stood before her.

After a cordial greeting, he turned and said, "I wish to speak to you, Miss Stratford."

"I am sorry I have no room to receive you in, replied Selina, "so our conversation must take place here."

"What, so soon !" muttered Mr. Vernon. "I did not think that you would already, my dear young lady, have experienced the effect of altered circumstances. I expected better things from the Mesdames Patterson. I came for the purpose of inviting you to take up your abode at my humble home for the present. My wife will be proud and happy to receive

you; and be assured that whatever our poor house may want in elegance, you shall find no deficiency in the cordiality and sincerity of our welcome. Since I have seen the effect produced here by our recent affliction, I am doubly anxious that you should seek a home with my wife; so let me implore you to accept at once our invitation, and let me conduct you to my house."

The warmth and kindness with which the invitation was urged, and a recollection of the squalid chamber and bed, to be shared with Miss Waterhouse, decided Selina to accept it. She requested an interview with the Mesdames Patterson, communicated to them her intention of immediately leaving their establishment, and solicited their recommendation to procure her a situation as governess in a private family.

"Really you must excuse our doing any such thing," replied the senior of the sisters. "Leaving our house in such a sudden, I may say, such a *mysterious* manner, at a moment's notice, has a very strange appearance, to say the least of it. I cannot help thinking that you make a

very ungrateful return,—yes, a very ungrateful return, indeed, for our great kindness in offering to maintain you, after the heavy loss we have sustained by you ; and as you choose to leave our house, and throw yourself on the protection of Heaven knows who ——”

“ Pardon me, madam, for interrupting you. I am going to the house of one of my oldest friends, of one who has known me from my infancy, Mr. Vernon, the senior clerk of my late friend Mr. Manvers.”

“ Then you may look to him for a recommendation ; for I repeat, *we* shall certainly not permit any reference to be made to us, and we desire to hear or see nothing more of a person who has proved so ungrateful.”

Selina hastened to the wretched chamber where her now scanty wardrobe had been deposited ; and having had it removed down stairs, she entered the hackney coach which Mr. Vernon had called to the door, and accompanied by him, was driven off to his house.

The good man looked surprised, when, in answer to his question of whether the small

box in the coach contained all her property, she told him of the seizure made of all her valuables and clothes by the Mesdames Patterson.

“ How I rejoice that I have taken you away from such heartless and selfish women !” said he. “ My wife blamed me for not having at once requested you to make your home with us ; but the truth is, I expected to the last that Mrs. Forsythe would offer you an asylum with her, or at least make some provision for you ; and seeing the dislike and unjust suspicions she entertained towards me, I feared that were we to take you at once to our humble abode, it might prejudice her against you, and prevent her serving you. As, however, she has declared that she will do nothing for you, there is no longer any good to be accomplished by my wife and I holding back from proving to you the affection and respect we entertain. We feel that we cannot better show our gratitude to our departed friend and benefactor than by endeavouring to befriend one he so truly loved. But here we are at home. There’s my wife peeping over the blind, impatient for our arrival. Welcome, my dear young lady, welcome.”

The cordial reception given by Mrs. Vernon, who vied with her husband in kindness towards the orphan, was a balm to the wound inflicted on her heart by the worldly-minded Mesdames Patterson. She was soon installed in possession of a small, but neat and cheerful room, which, with its white dimity bed and window curtains, and its simple but useful furniture, appeared charming in her eyes after the dreary attic, which she was to have shared with Miss Waterhouse, had she remained in the establishment at Sloane-street. A homely but comfortable dinner was soon after served by a tidy, decent-looking young woman, and, although neither plate, expensive china, damask, nor cut-glass decked the board, the plenty and excellence of the viands more than compensated for their absence, and the cordiality of the host and hostess formed so striking a contrast to the cold formality of the Misses Patterson, or the rude manners of Mrs. Forsythe, that Selina was soothed and cheered by it. "Here, my dear young lady," said Mr. Vernon after dinner, "is the key of my book-case, which contains, if not a large, at

least a good selection of books, the solace of my leisure hours, which will prevent time hanging heavily on your hands, when my wife is occupied with her household concerns."

"I hope Mrs. Vernon will treat me without ceremony, and allow me to make myself useful," replied Selina. "I can work tolerably well at my needle, and will be glad to assist in any plain work that may be required."

"Your society, dear young lady, will amply repay us, without your troubling yourself with needle-work. The presence of a youthful guest, and, above all, such a one as you, will be as a cordial to our old hearts. It will warm them, and bring back the reminiscences of our youth. Often have we wished that the Almighty had blessed us with a daughter, and pictured to ourselves how she would have cheered our hearth; for age requires the solace of youth to break in on its sombre thoughts, as nature does the sun-beams that disperse the clouds of winter."

"Yes," observed the worthy Mrs. Vernon, "I feel Miss Stratford's presence will be a comfort to us."

After a few days passed in quiet comfort with this excellent pair, Selina thought that it behoved her to make some exertion to earn a livelihood for herself, and not sit down in idleness, a dependant on Mr. and Mrs. Vernon. She expressed her sentiments on this point to them, and though they endeavoured to make her feel that her presence beneath their roof, far from being a source of expense beyond their means, was a positive pleasure to them, they could not conquer her repugnance to continue a tax on their hospitality and kindness. They declared that, could they at their decease bequeath to her the modest competency they now enjoyed, they never would have permitted her to seek a home elsewhere; but, knowing that this was impossible, they having some years before invested their *all* in an annuity for their joint lives, they would not listen to the promptings of their own desire to retain her, when opportunities might offer for her earning an independence, or making friends more able, though not more willing, to serve her than themselves.

“There is still plenty of time, dear child,”

said Mr. Vernon, “to think of procuring you a situation. Why should you be in such a hurry to leave us?”

“How we shall miss you,” added his wife; “whenever I looked on your bright face, I felt as if I beheld a nosegay of flowers fresh from the garden. It reminded me of other times, when I too was young, just as flowers always do; and if we consulted our own happiness, never would we consent to your leaving us. But we must not be selfish. We must think of you, and not of ourselves, unable as we are, by the way in which we have locked up our little fortune, before we thought you would ever stand in need of it, to secure you a competency when we shall be no more.”

Such were the persons whom it was the good fortune of the orphan to be brought in contact with, when she believed herself without a friend to whom she could turn for refuge; and deeply was their kindness engraved on her heart. Yes, there are many still on earth as good and kind, to prove that though the world corrupts some, it does not sully fine natures.

## CHAPTER XV.

“How unfortunate it is, my dear,” observed Mrs. Vernon, “that we have no acquaintances in a sphere of life that would be useful in obtaining Miss Stratford a suitable position. With her talents and accomplishments, she might aspire to enter into one of the noblest families as a governess; but such appointments cannot be obtained without recommendations from persons of a certain station in life, and I fear a reference to such plain and humble individuals as ourselves would not satisfy a great lady.”

“More’s the pity,” observed Mr. Vernon, “but it can’t be helped; we must do what we can, my dear. I believe the general plan is to insert an advertisement in one of the newspapers. We will try this scheme, and take our chance for its success. How unfortunate that those worldly-minded and selfish women, the Misses Patterson, should have behaved so ill at

the last; for a reference to them, the young lady never having been out before as a governess, would have removed all difficulty."

"Yes, it is peculiarly unfortunate," added Mrs. Vernon, thoughtfully.

The advertisement was inserted in a newspaper, and after two or three days a letter was addressed to Selina, desiring her to call in Grosvenor Square, on the Countess of Almond-bury.

"I wish we knew something of this lady," said Mrs. Vernon, as she read over for the third time the note from Grosvenor Square. "The address comes from a good quarter; does it not, my dear?"

"O yes; Grosvenor Square is, to my thinking, for the nobility what Lombard Street is for bankers—a sort of voucher for their respectability. There are no furnished houses to be let by the season there, as in other fashionable parts of London. One does not see there a house occupied one spring by a duke, and the next by some returned nabob or successful speculator. No; Grosvenor Square is chiefly inhabited by

the descendants of those who built the mansions it contains, and a portion of the thrift and prudence that marked their ancestors seems still to prevail in the establishments there. New quarters of London are soon filled by another kind of inhabitants, if not another class,—the elder sons of peers, on their marriage, with limited means, and unlimited habits of expense, and bankers, merchants, and bill-brokers, from the city, who vie with these scions of nobility in the tastefulness of their establishments.”

“ Well, I’m glad, my dear, that the letter comes from the part of the west-end you think most favourably of ; nevertheless, I should like to know something of the family in which this dear girl is likely to be placed.”

“ It just strikes me that I have heard Lady Almondbury well spoken of ; my lord dealt with my late worthy employer for many years, and servants *will* talk of their lords and ladies with great freedom when they call to give orders—a practice I have always checked as much as possible, but which young and giddy clerks, who like gossip, are prone to encourage. Yes, I

have heard Lady Almondbury spoken of as an excellent lady, of delicate health. Of his lordship I don't remember to have heard much, if anything."

"I'm glad I had a nice new black silk dress, and a pretty cloak and bonnet, made for Miss Stratford," observed Mrs. Vernon, "for now they will come in quite handy; for those hard-hearted women, the Misses Pattersons, have left her scarcely anything good to wear."

"We must fit her out with a neat stock of clothes, my dear, that she may appear respectably in whatever family she enters.—You'll attend to this."——"Certainly, and with great pleasure."

The next day Selina, accompanied by Mrs. Vernon, went to Lady Almondbury's, in Grosvenor Square. They left the hired vehicle, in which they had come, before they reached the door, and then, with a timidity which neither could vanquish, they approached and knocked at the door. The porter, a grey-headed and portly man, with a rubicund face and swelled ankles, admitted them into the hall, and, having rung a bell, sent up by the footman who answered it,

the note handed him by Mrs. Vernon. The porter eyed both as they stood in the hall with an expression of curiosity that somewhat disturbed them, this being the first time that either had been exposed to a similar scrutiny, or had been allowed to remain standing in a hall.

“The ladies are requested to remain a few minutes in the waiting-room,” said the footman who had taken up the note, and who threw open the door of a room that communicated with the hall.

“I’m glad, my dear, that we have got in here, away from that stern-looking porter,” observed Mrs. Vernon; “I did not half like the way he looked at us; it seems to me that I could better encounter fifty lords and ladies, however proud and haughty they might be, than be brought in contact with their servants.”

“I experienced precisely the same feeling, my kind friend,” observed Selina; but before she had time to say more, they were summoned to the boudoir of Lady Almondbury. They found that lady seated in a *bergère*, propped up by pillows, and her fragile form and pallid cheeks

but too well attested the delicacy of health which she urged as an apology for having kept them waiting. The tasteful and elegant decorations of the room, so far superior to anything that either Selina or her companion had ever previously seen, failed to draw their attention from the faded yet still lovely mistress of the mansion.

“Pray be seated,” said she, gracefully bending her head, and pointing to chairs near her; “this young lady,” and she looked kindly at Selina, “has never, I suppose, been out as a governess before.”

Mrs. Vernon replied in the affirmative.

“I could have wished that she had been a few years older,” resumed Lady Almondbury; “but her youth,” and she smiled encouragingly, “is not an insuperable objection. I suppose you are a near relative, madam?” said the Countess, turning to Mrs. Vernon.

“No, madam; Miss Stratford is no relation of mine: she is an orphan, but her parents, and indeed herself, were known to my husband ever since this young lady was a few months old; and we are greatly attached to her.”

Lady Almondbury looked kindly at the speaker, and then, with a glance full of pity and interest, at Selina ;—her beautiful and changeful countenance denoted her sensibility.

“An orphan !” repeated Lady Almondbury, and she sighed deeply ; “how old was Miss Stratford when she lost her mother ?”

“Little more than a year, madam.”

Lady Almondbury again sighed, and, looking with increased kindness towards Selina, said, “I shall certainly give Miss Stratford a trial. Do not imagine that I at all doubt her abilities, but she is so young, and my little girl has been sadly spoiled by me, I am sorry to say. With health like mine, threatening every day to take me from my poor child, it is difficult to refrain from over-indulgence ;” and Lady Almondbury’s lips trembled with emotion as she spoke.

“Miss Stratford will, I am sure, madam, be happy to give your ladyship an opportunity of judging of her qualifications for the situation for which she offers herself ; and, never having previously been out, she will be grateful for any advice.”

Lady Almondbury, having examined Selina's attainments with a tact and delicacy that marked the extent of her own, professed herself so satisfied with the result, that she at once offered her very liberal terms, and requested that she would enter on her new duties with as little delay as possible. Mrs. Vernon explained that *hers* was the only reference Miss Stratford had to offer, frankly stating, as concisely as could be, why the Mesdames Patterson were ill-disposed to assist Selina's views.

"*Your* recommendation, madam, will be quite sufficient," replied Lady Almondbury, perfectly satisfied, from the countenance and manner of Mrs. Vernon, that she would be safe in relying on her for the respectability and worthiness of any one she recommended.

"I will send for my little girl," added her ladyship, ringing a silver bell which soon brought a little page, who was dismissed in search of the Lady Adelaide. The young lady came attended by a French *bonne*, who had hitherto taken charge of her.

Lady Adelaide was a lovely child, strikingly

like her mother, into whose arms she rushed the moment she entered the room, and whom she half suffocated with her kisses.

“*Doucement, doucement, miladi,*” said the French woman, “you will make *madame la comtesse* ill.”

“So you always say, *Felicité*, whenever I kiss my own darling mamma,” observed Lady Adelaide, poutingly, and, again throwing her arms around the neck of her mother, and pressing her to her heart.

“This is your governess, dearest. Miss Stratford, let me present your future pupil to you,” said Lady Almondbury.

The child looked up, half timidly, half inquisitively, in the face of Selina, and then reached out her little dimpled hand to meet that of her new governess.

“You won’t say mamma spoils me, will you?” said, she; then glancing at her French attendant, who shrugged her shoulders, and seemed very well disposed to assert her grounds for having often previously expressed that opinion, had she not been restrained by the presence of the

countess. "Don't go away, for I am sure I shall like you. Do stay!" urged Lady Adelaide, holding the shawl of Selina.

"Miss Stratford will return in three or four days, my dear love, and if you are good will always remain with you," observed Lady Almondbury.

"But why can't she stay now, dear mamma?"

"*La voilà, toujours impatiente, toujours cherchant que tout le monde suive sa volonté,*" murmured the French woman, *sotto voce*.

"Miss Stratford has arrangements to make that will prevent her being able to remain with you at present, dearest; but three or four days will soon pass away, and then you will see her again."

Pleased that the little girl had taken a fancy to her, Selina met her advances half way, which gratified the mother as well as the child; and when she took her leave, Lady Almondbury graciously and gracefully told Mrs. Vernon that she hoped she would often come and see Miss Stratford, when that young lady became an inmate of Almondbury House.

"Now, mind you come back, for I shall long to see you again, indeed I shall," said Lady Adelaide, as Mrs. Vernon and Selina withdrew, and escorted by the little page, who again answered the summons of the silver bell, were ushered down stairs.

"What a beautiful woman, and how kind and gentle!" exclaimed Selina, when, seated in the carriage that conveyed them, she found herself *tête-a-tête* with her friend Mrs. Vernon.

"Yes; Lady Almondbury is certainly a lovely, and appears to be a most amiable lady. What a pity it is that she should be in such very delicate health," observed Mrs. Vernon. "I fear her days are numbered, for never have I seen more marked symptoms of that fatal malady, consumption, than in her still beautiful face."

"May Heaven avert it!" replied Selina; "for, apart from all selfish considerations, I already feel a strong interest in, and predisposition to like Lady Almondbury and my future little pupil."

"I, too, entertain a similar sentiment towards

them, and shall part from you with mitigated pain and regret, from the belief that you will be with amiable and kind persons. It will also be a great comfort to be permitted to visit you, dearest Selina; a privilege not often accorded to the friends or relatives of governesses."

"How fortunate I am, dear Mrs. Vernon, to have found a situation with such a family."

"Heaven grant that nothing may occur to render it less agreeable than you anticipate."

Mr. Vernon was equally pleased as his wife when he heard that Selina had formed an engagement which seemed in every sense to promise well. He nevertheless told her to remember, that, should any unforeseen event occur to render her stay in Lady Almondbury's family disagreeable to her, she was always to look upon his house as her home, to which she would ever be welcomed, as if she were his own child. The next day he commissioned his kind-hearted wife to purchase all that was requisite to enable Selina to appear in a suitable manner in the situation she was about to enter. Nor did he forget, knowing the value of regularity with

regard to time, to buy her a neat watch, to replace the more costly one taken possession of by the Mesdames Patterson. He also forced into her hand, at parting, a small purse well stocked, to meet the exigencies that might occur before her first quarter's salary became due. Selina could not leave her kind friends without tears; nor were they less moved.

When left together, "Let us," said Mrs. Vernon, "prove our affection for the dear girl better than by vain regrets for her absence. Let us give up a few of our little luxuries, that we can well dispense with, and appropriate the savings to form a fund for her to inherit at our deaths. Though small it will be useful."

"An excellent thought, my dear wife; but so I must say all your thoughts are. Yes, there are many things which we can do without, and the absence of which, so far from being felt to be privations, will be sources of complacency, when the motive and result are taken into consideration."

"Just like you, my dear John, ever ready to do a kind action," said Mrs. Vernon, taking the

hand of her husband, and pressing her lips to his cheek. "Now, mind, the first thing to be given up is our annual holiday of a fortnight by the sea-side, which I know you only undertook because you fancied it necessary for my health, which it really is not, for I never was in better health. That will be a saving of twelve or fifteen pounds; and the next thing to be given up is the new silk gown, cloak, and bonnet you buy for me every Christmas; there will be a saving of twelve pounds more; so fancy, twenty-five, or twenty-seven pounds saved in things that can be perfectly well done without."

"No, my dear Mary, your health must not suffer from losing your yearly trip to the sea. *That* would never do; and, as to giving up the pleasure of buying your Christmas gifts, and seeing you look so well in them, I have not self-denial enough to do that. No, let the savings be on *my* side, and not on yours. I can make out a list as long as my arm, of things I can perfectly do without; nay, be all the better for leaving off."

"Now don't provoke me, John. You know

you're always wanting to give up all your little comforts, but won't hear of mine being touched. Yes you are—you may shake your head, but it's all true. Don't you remember when our poor neighbour Tracey's house was burnt to the ground, and all his property destroyed, how you gave up buying any thing, or drinking a glass of wine for a whole year, in order that you might help him?"

"Yes, and I remember also, Mary, that our first quarrel was because I would not let you strip yourself of your comforts on that occasion."

"Well, but haven't I as good a right to give up my comforts, as you have to give up yours? Yet you always will prevent me," and Mrs. Vernon looked half offended.

Her husband glanced at her with affection beaming in his eyes, and drawing her fondly towards him said, "If you knew, my dear Mary, the comfort and blessing you have been for thirty years to me, you could well understand how easily I can give up what other persons think comforts, or even necessities."

There was such truthfulness in his look and

voice, that his wife's eyes became suffused with tears, and she hid them in that fond and faithful breast, murmuring, half indistinctly from emotion, "That it was just like him, always carrying every thing his own way, and making her love him better every day of her life."

Selina Stratford had entered her new home, thankful to Divine Providence for having given her one that offered so many causes for gratitude. She found a suite of rooms at Almondbury House appropriated to her use, and fitted up in a style of elegance and comfort that left nothing to be desired. Her pupil welcomed her with every demonstration of satisfaction; and, though more than usually suffering that day, Lady Almondbury received her in her dressing-room, and initiated her into the daily routine her ladyship wished to be preserved. A male and female attendant were appointed to receive her orders; a carriage was to be ready every day to convey her pupil and herself to Kensington Gardens; and Lady Almondbury told her she must not hesitate in commanding any thing requisite for her use.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE first week of Selina's residence in Almondbury House passed off most agreeably to her. The kindness of its fair and gentle mistress, and the docility of her pupil, rendered her situation even more agreeable than her most sanguine hopes could have anticipated; and grateful was she to Providence for having found so eligible a home. When the lessons were over, by Lady Almondbury's desire, she would come with her pupil and sit with her ladyship; conversing, or playing and singing, according to the wish of Lady Almondbury, who, herself an admirable musician, and very fond of music, was so extremely indulgent in judging the performance of others, that Selina, though very timid at first singing before so perfect a judge, soon learned not to fear her

criticism, and acquired much benefit from the refined taste of her kind patroness. The lessons in drawing would also often be given in presence of the countess, who marked with pleasure the progress her child made in this accomplishment.

The rapid improvement soon visible in this interesting child was a source of the greatest gratification to Lady Almondbury, while it enhanced her esteem and regard for Selina, to whom she believed it was due. When Lady Adelaide had gone to bed, Lady Almondbury would regularly summon the governess to her boudoir to read aloud for her or to converse; and by degrees formed such a friendship for her, and evinced such an interest, that she drew from her every incident of her past life. The more Selina knew the mother of her pupil, the more did her attachment for her increase. Never previously had she known so fascinating and amiable a person; and as her fine qualities became revealed, she more than ever felt surprised that the husband of such a woman, and in so delicate a state of health too, could leave

her for weeks, while he pursued his own amusement, shooting in the Highlands of Scotland, where he had hired a moor for the season. It struck her also as strange that so little reference was made to Lord Almondbury by his wife or child, and as she acquired a greater knowledge of the affectionate nature of both, she felt disposed to augur ill of him from this circumstance.

One day Lady Almondbury announced to her daughter that her papa might be expected home in a day or two.

“What, *so soon*, mamma?” exclaimed the child, her whole countenance changing from its usual sweet expression to one of dissatisfaction.

Lady Almondbury’s pale cheek became flushed for a moment, for she knew the inference that must be drawn from the little girl’s *naïve* remark; but fearful of drawing forth a further corroboration of how little Lady Adelaide had missed or regretted the long absence of her father, she dropped the subject. Not so the child, who after a few minutes’ silence, and with a more gloomy expression of countenance

than Selina had ever previously seen her wear, she observed, "I thought papa would stay away a long time, mamma."

"He has been absent several weeks, my love."

"Has he indeed! Well I'm sure I thought it had been only one or two," was the artless reply.

There was a nervous trepidation in the manner of Lady Almondbury for the rest of the day; and, towards evening, a feverish excitement replaced the usual gentle calmness and sweetness that formed so peculiar a characteristic in her. The little silver bell was repeatedly had recourse to, and the *maître d'hôtel* and housekeeper had been more than once summoned to her ladyship's presence, to receive injunctions to neglect nothing in the preparations for their lord's arrival. The cook must have every thing ready to furnish a repast for his lordship with as little delay as possible, to be served as soon after his arrival as he might desire. His bath must be ready, his wines in ice; the morning and evening papers ironed, and laid on his library table; and in short so

numerous and minute were the orders given by the countess for the reception of her lord, that even a less observant person than Selina might have guessed that there was more of fear than of love in this assiduity, even had not the nervousness and changed aspect of both mother and child betrayed that it was not a fond husband and father, but an *exigeant* domestic tyrant, for whom these preparations were made. Lord Almondbury came not that evening, but his wife gave instructions that every thing should be kept prepared in case he arrived during the night. The next day, and another passed, and he appeared not, the whole establishment being kept on the *qui vive* ; but on the evening of the fourth day from that on which he had been expected, he arrived.

Selina was in the boudoir with Lady Almondbury when his lordship entered it, and, had any doubts existed in her mind with regard to his character, they would speedily have been dispelled by the manner in which he met his charming and suffering wife after a separation of so many weeks.

“How are you, Frances? Much as usual, I suppose; always ailing, or at least always complaining;” and he took the trembling little hand that was extended to him, and just touched the brow of his wife with his lips. He stared rudely at Selina, but without bowing or showing any of the usual observances which men show to women in similar circumstances. Lady Almondbury quickly noticed this want of respect towards her favourite, and hastened to name her, saying, “This young lady is Miss Stratford, whom I wrote to you about.”

“Oh, Adelaide’s governess, is it? Then I pity her, for by Jupiter she will have anything but a pleasant time with that tiresome troublesome girl, unless she rules her with a firm hand.”

Lady Almondbury changed colour, and her eyes filled with tears, which she turned her head to conceal, but her husband had noticed them, and there was something brutal in the mode in which he evinced his recognition of his wife’s wounded feelings.

“What! tears!” exclaimed he, “and all because I speak my mind about Adelaide, who,

you must confess, is the most disagreeable girl in the world."

Anxious to change the subject, Lady Almondbury, with an effort to control her emotion, that merited a better reward than she could hope from her tyrannical lord and master, expressed a hope that he had enjoyed his sojourn in Scotland, and had good sport.

"Devilish bad, I can tell you; but that was owing to my being such a fool as to have taken two fellows with me, who are as good shots as myself, and who consequently destroyed more game than I expected. I asked them, merely to have some one to talk to in the evenings, in case I did not fall asleep; but never again will I take a fellow who is a good shot—that I'm determined on. What's going on in town? But what's the use of asking you? I dare say you know no more than Adelaide, probably less, for she most likely hears the gossip of the servants."

"Miss Stratford will guard against that evil," observed Lady Almondbury.

"I must go and have some dinner, and, as

usual, I dare say I shall have a devilish bad one; but that is sure to be the case when the mistress of a house is sickly and lives on slops. Now it's quite a pleasure to dine at Merlingham's or Oxenford's; for their wives are epicures, and understand the merits of a good *cuisine*; while you, Frances," and he glanced contemptuously towards his wife, "can appreciate nothing beyond a boiled chicken, a *consommé*, or some similarly insipid food for invalids."

When Lord Almondbury left the room, a silence of some duration ensued. It was evident that his wife was pained and embarrassed, and when she spoke it was to attempt some excuse for him.

"Men, and particularly those blessed with strong constitutions," observed Lady Almondbury, "are prone to dislike sick rooms, if not sick people; it is but natural," and a deep sigh followed the admission, "for those to whom illness is a stranger cannot make allowance for the infirmities of invalids, or the privations and constraint to which they must submit."

Selina did not venture to reply, but she thought that hard indeed must be the heart, and unkind the nature of him, whose conduct drew from his fair and gentle wife this attempt to excuse it; but in proportion as her bad opinion of him increased did her high one of Lady Almondbury become more firmly established. Her patience and resignation under severe physical suffering, unrelieved, too, by the affection or attention of him who ought to have endeavoured to lighten her sense of them, created the liveliest interest, joined to the most profound respect for her, in the heart of Selina, who devoted herself, with unceasing care, not only to the discharge of her duty towards her pupil, but to render the confinement of Lady Almondbury less irksome and dull than it had hitherto been. She endeavoured to amuse and interest the lonely valetudinarian, and, above all, delighted her by drawing forth in her presence proofs of the rapid progress made by Lady Adelaide, whose natural cleverness, and facility in acquiring knowledge, was really most gratifying.

The first time Selina was present at an inter-

view between Lord Almondbury and his daughter, which took place in the boudoir of Lady Almondbury, she was surprised, and, truth to say, shocked, at the want of natural affection on both sides. The father only nodded to the child, and she in return merely made him a formal curtsey.

“Go and kiss papa, my dear,” said the fond mother timidly.

“I beg to be excused,” was the hard speech of the father. “I have no pleasure in being kissed by children, and above all when the mark of affection is commanded, and not spontaneous.”

“Adelaide would, I am sure, be glad to embrace you, if you would encourage her a little,” remarked Lady Almondbury timidly.

“Do you wish to kiss me, young lady?” demanded the unnatural parent, with a most forbidding scowl.

“No,” replied the child; “you never wish to kiss *me*, and so I don’t want to kiss *you*.”

“Adelaide, my dear,” said Lady Almondbury; “you should not ——”

“What! would you make the girl false?”

exclaimed the father angrily. "If she has one good quality in her perverse nature—that of speaking the truth—why should you wish to destroy it?"

"You mistake; indeed you do," said the mother; "you check all your child's advances by your sternness towards her; but, be assured, it only requires a little kindness to make her love you as fondly as she does me."

"Do you love me?" demanded Lord Almondbury, again looking sternly at the little girl.

"No, I don't," was the honest reply.

"Well, I like you for your frankness, for I hate hypocrisy and fawning," was the ungracious observation.

"You would be pleased to see the progress Adelaide has made in her studies since she has had the advantage of being under Miss Stratford's care," said Lady Almondbury.

"Oh! spare me the exhibition," exclaimed Lord Almondbury; "the bare notion sets me yawning!" and, suiting the action to the word, he opened his mouth to its utmost extent, and stretched his arms. "Nothing bores me so much

as when mothers take it into their heads to show off their children, who, examined by their teachers, repeat their lessons by rote, like parrots, and understand them as little."

Lady Almondbury sighed, but did not attempt to reason with her husband. She too well knew the utter uselessness of such a measure, but her silence offended her tyrant almost as much as words would have done, for he arose and left the room, muttering something about "persons who set themselves up as martyrs, in order to excite commiseration."

When the door closed after him, Lady Adelaide rushed to her mother, and fondly embraced her.

"Dear, darling mamma," exclaimed the affectionate girl, "how I do love you and hate papa!"

"Adelaide, how you shock, how you distress me! Do you not know that it is most sinful, most wicked, for a child not to love its father?"

"But papa does not love *me* the least bit, indeed he doesn't, dear mamma; and how can I love him, when he doesn't love me?"

“Because it is your duty, Adelaide: how often have I told you this, and repeated to you the deep pain you inflict on me by not showing a proper affection to your father!”

“I’m very sorry to give *you* pain, dear kind mamma; but I don’t know what to do. You tell me, and so does dear Miss Stratford, that I must always speak the truth. Now, if I say I love papa, it will not be the truth; and, though I try all I can to love him, I can’t; indeed I can’t, mamma!” and the child’s eyes filled with tears, and she hid her face in her mother’s bosom.

“You will turn your attention to this point,” said Lady Almondbury to Selina in Italian. “It is true, and I deeply regret it; Lord Almondbury does not like children, and least of all girls. He was greatly disappointed when this dear child was born; he wished for a boy; most, if not all, men do; and he has never quite got over the disappointment. Point out to my poor Adelaide her duty; make her understand that she is to conciliate her father by every means in her power, for the first wish of my heart is,—knowing how precarious my life is, on

how frail a thread it depends,—is to see a mutual affection spring up where it is so natural it should be. How terrible will it be for my poor child, when I am taken from her, to find neither consolation nor affection in her remaining parent !”

Although the little girl did not understand Italian, the mournful expression of her mother's face, and the tremulous movement of her lips, betrayed her agitation, and the little girl surmised her grief ; so, clinging fondly to her mother's breast, and looking up in her face she exclaimed, “ Ah, dearest mamma ! do not look so sad, and I will do anything to please you. Yes, I will try ever so much to love papa ; indeed I will, for I can't bear to see you unhappy ; indeed I can't !”

A few days after this scene Selina and her pupil were passing through the park, on their route to take their daily walk in Kensington Gardens. They saw Lord Almondbury riding with a distinguished-looking elderly man, who seemed to draw his lordship's attention to them. The carriage passed on, without one sign of re-

cognition from' the father to his child, nor did a single smile, on her part, mark Lady Adelaide's notice of her parent.

"What a fine countenance the young lady in your carriage has!" observed the companion of Lord Almondbury.

"Yes," replied he; "she has a very fine face. It is a pity, however, that she happens to be one of the saints—a perfect pattern of propriety and prudence, in the shape of a governess to my daughter."

"But in the governess of one's daughter such peculiarities are surely not to be found fault with!" was the reply.

"Perhaps not always; but there *are* certain positions, and mine is one of them, in which, when a pretty girl is by chance thrown in one's way, without one's having sought her, it would be very agreeable to find that she was neither cold nor prudish."

"I must confess, although I do not pretend to be more severe than most other men, that I think one's sins should never be committed at home, and that the roof beneath which dwell a

wife and child should be sacred. To corrupt the *morals* of the person to whom is confided the education of a daughter, is, in my opinion, a crime of deep dye."

"When such crimes, as you term them, are committed, wives are always to blame. If they *will* be so foolish as to throw temptation in the way of poor weak men, they must take the consequences."

"That is, in other words, if a wife confides in the faith and honour of her husband, which every pure-minded one is prone to do, she ought, according to your doctrine, to be punished for her misplaced confidence. It is precisely this sort of reasoning that renders wives so fearful of engaging handsome governesses, and leaves the last so frequently without employment, as if the gift of beauty debarred them from the possession of the still more precious one—virtue. I seldom see a pretty woman enacting the difficult and painful *rôle* of governess, without observing that she is exposed to the most humiliating suspicions. The common civility due to every one of the sex cannot be paid her, without its exciting

surmises, which originate less in any just ground, furnished by the slightest levity or encouragement on her part, than in the too well-founded knowledge of the laxity of principle of our sex."

"I am afraid the best of us all are but sad sinners," observed Lord Almendbury, with a self-complacency more suited to the admission of a community in the good qualities of mankind than in that which dishonours them. This evident self-complacency seemed to disgust his companion, who abruptly wished him good morning, and turned his horse's head in another direction.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON :

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.



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